

**JEFFERSON' S REPUBLIC: THE DECLARATION OF
INDEPENDENCE, STATUTE OF VIRGINIA FOR RELIGIOUS
FREEDOM AND THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA**

**BY
BAHAR GÜRSEL**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE INSTITUTE FOR
GRADUATE STUDIES IN ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY**

BILKENT UNIVERSITY

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
ASSOC. PROF. DR. RUSSELL L. JOHNSON**

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Approved by the Institute of Economics and Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Ali Karaosmanoğlu

Director of Institute of Economics and Social Sciences



I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of History.

Ass. Prof. Dr. Russell L. Johnson

(Thesis Supervisor)



I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of History.

Ass. Prof. Dr. Paul Latimer

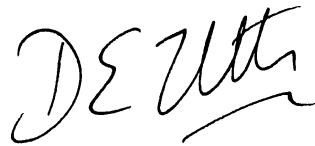
(Committee Member)



I certify that I have read this thesis and in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of History.

Ass. Prof. Dr. David E. Thornton

(Committee Member)



ABSTRACT

Thomas Jefferson is one of the leading figures of the era of the establishment of the United States of America. Like the other founding fathers of the country, there are still unexplored parts of his ideas, and the discussion about his political philosophy continues. This thesis will shed light on Thomas Jefferson's ideas about government, religion and education, or more simply put, on Jefferson's thoughts about an ideal society. The three works which Jefferson regarded as his most important accomplishments and which are written on his gravestone are the Declaration of Independence, Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and the University of Virginia. Therefore, this thesis will focus on these different sources for Jefferson's opinions about politics, religion and the accumulation of knowledge. For Jefferson, these were the most crucial factors in order to establish an independent country of virtuous citizens. By examining these three areas, this thesis will point out the features of Jefferson's social and political ideology and sometimes it will reflect how much European or American his ideas were.

OZET

Thomas Jefferson, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin kuruluşunda payı olan en önemli şahsiyetlerden biridir. Diğer kurucularda da olduğu gibi, düşüncelerinin hala keşfedilmemiş bölümleri vardır ve siyasal felsefesi hakkındaki tartışmalar devam etmektedir. Bu tez, Thomas Jefferson'ın hükümet, din ve eğitim hakkındaki, veya kısaca, ideal toplum üzerindeki fikirlerine ışık tutacaktır. Jefferson'ın mezar taşında da yazılı olan kendisine göre en önemli başarıları, Bağımsızlık Beyannamesi, Virginia Din Özgürlüğü yasası ve Virginia Üniversitesi'dir. Jefferson'a göre, erdemli vatandaşlardan oluşan bağımsız bir ülke kurmak için en önemli faktörler olan politika, din özgürlüğü ve eğitim hakkındaki düşüncelerini açıklamak için bu tezde bu üç değişik kaynak incelenecektir. Bu inceleme sonunda, bu tez, Jefferson'ın toplumsal ve siyasal ideolojisinin özelliklerini ve de düşüncelerinin ne kadar Avrupalı ya da Amerikalı olduğunu ortaya çıkaracaktır.

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INTRODUCTION

“Author of the Declaration of Independence, of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and father of the University of Virginia.” These are the words that are written on Thomas Jefferson’s gravestone.¹ Opposite to most wealthy and famous men’s gravestones, it is a simple gravestone, a small version of the colossal stones of the ancient Egyptians on which the glories of the pharaohs were proclaimed. Jefferson spent all his long life studying and writing, but he wanted to be remembered by these three specific accomplishments instead of the totality of things that he had done during his life. This was all—“& not a word more,” he wrote—that he wanted to be remembered for.² This fact makes the Declaration of Independence, the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and the University of Virginia worthy of attention in order to comprehend Jefferson’s political and social philosophy that shaped American politics and way of life.

At first sight, these three deeds seem independent from each other, but, in fact, they are strongly related. They symbolize the new order in America which Jefferson desired to build. The Declaration of Independence was the first step that Jefferson took; he declared independence from Great Britain by stating the natural and unalienable rights of the whole of mankind, not only the American colonists. If these rights would be taken from a society, its members would become slaves

¹ Adams, William Howard, *Jefferson’s Monticello* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), p. 249.

² Padover, Saul K., *Thomas Jefferson and the Foundations of Freedom* (Student Edition, 1956), p. 43

and could not live like human beings. Moreover, they could not create a society in which "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" became the main objectives. That kind of an ideal society could only be formed by the direct participation of free virtuous citizens who were politically and morally mature and had equal rights in the social and political arena. If a king, or a tyrant, would end these rights, it would become the right of the people to declare independence.

Freedom, according to Jefferson, also included religious freedom; the right to believe in any form of religious belief which would do no harm to other people. Jefferson opposed the presence of an established church between the federal state and its citizens; the Anglican church had formed a kind of religious tyranny to force everyone to believe in one religion and that was against the idea of liberty and democracy. A government would only be established to protect people, not to force them obey a particular set of rules. For Jefferson, governments were established among people deriving their power from the people, and the people could not be forced to obey any rule that would act against their independence or which would damage their freedom and equality

Freedom would not be adequate for a people who had only begun to learn its meaning and virtues. The coming generations should know its importance and the dangers against it. With the assistance of education Americans and their children would learn the meaning of liberty, equality and democracy, and then, they would control and protect their country. Accordingly, America was in need of an educated citizenry and that was

why Jefferson at the advanced age of seventy-five established the University of Virginia.

Each of these three major accomplishments in his life seems to have been done for others; the Declaration of Independence was written for the independence of the American nation, the Statute was about religious freedom in Virginia and the University was established in that state. Jefferson was a Virginian, and he spent most of his life in Virginia at his home, Monticello. But a careful study will reveal the fact that there were universal values in Jefferson's works. Jefferson established the university in order to give "universal education" that included most of the western languages from Greek and Latin to German and Italian, and most of the works of the European writers, apart from the Tories, which was a paradox of Jefferson regarding freedom and democracy, were read at the university. Jefferson loved his country but never denied his past. On the contrary, he boasted of his Saxon ancestors and admired the ancient republics of Greece and Rome. America was the new world in which citizens would harmonize all the good virtues and principles of the past to create a country that would recall the golden ages of history, and Jefferson was one of the key leaders who would illuminate the way to achieve that goal. The power and the virtue of the past that were reflected in the works of the European writers found their place in the efforts Jefferson made to establish his ideal country, America.

For historians, Thomas Jefferson was the leader of Republicans and Alexander Hamilton the leader of Federalists. The political argument between these two men is at the center of most of the historical

arguments about the establishment and the development of the United States politics. The struggle between Jefferson and Hamilton, the desire to shape the new republic according to the principles of Jeffersonianism and Hamiltonism, is an important part in United States history, but Jefferson views in opposing Federalism, apart from being a political rival, reflect his principles about the ideal republic.

Like the Whigs and Tories in England, Republicans and Federalists were two opposing political parties in the United States. From the time of the establishment of the country, these two groups conflicted with each other. The distinction between them was very clear: Jefferson was in search of a republic that would serve its citizens in a perfect manner, whereas in Jefferson's opinion, Hamilton wanted to establish a monarchy. Jefferson supported formation of a natural aristocracy whereas Hamilton supported a hereditary aristocracy; Jefferson was the man of the New World whereas Hamilton was the man of the Old World.

Thomas Jefferson's main goal was to create an ideal and uncorrupted republic, and Federalists were only one part of his enemies. Jefferson could never accept any negative factor that would change and manipulate the origins of the new republic; therefore he was against Hamilton's ideas which symbolized the corruption of the Old World. That corruption led the American colonies to declare independence and Jefferson would not adopt it again to ruin the newly established republic.

Nevertheless, that factor did not make Jefferson's political philosophy completely independent from Europe. On the contrary, Jefferson based his principles on the customs and virtues of the Old World. For Jefferson,

“virtue” was the most crucial factor in both establishing and protecting the United States of America. Jefferson found the principles of virtuous republics in the works of European thinkers who based their arguments on the works of the ancients. From this perspective, Jeffersonianism became the revival of the ancient republicanism in the New World.

Again different from his political opponents, Jefferson did not only have political ideas for the new republic. Politics did not mean only politics for him; like the ancients, it was a way of life that included all the elements which would make virtuous citizens. In order to comprehend the meaning and advantages of a republic, people would learn the meaning of independence and equality, and that would only be achieved in a completely free environment.

Jefferson’s three accomplishments that are written on his gravestone are his most important achievements because, as a whole, they reflect a plan of Jefferson’s ideal republic. Declaring independence was the first phase in Jefferson’s plan. Only with complete independence, could people promote their liberty. The Statute of Virginia of Religious Freedom was another important phase in Jefferson’s plan, reaching the standards of a completely free society. The University of Virginia was the last phase of the plan. Jefferson established the university to educate virtuous, free and republican individuals who would educate the coming generations in the same manner. In this way, the United States would continue to be the independent republic that Jefferson desired.

In brief, these three accomplishments were the results of Jefferson’s world view that was founded in Europe and developed in America.

Jefferson obeyed the rules of the past that made countries glorious and eliminated the defects that led them into corruption. He established his republic on the Old World's experience and the New World's energy.

While writing the thesis, Joyce Appleby's article, "What is Still American in Jefferson's Philosophy?" became the starting point in examining European influence on Jefferson.³ Most historians write about these three accomplishments of Jefferson, but in a separate manner. Appleby's article is more related to economy and European influence rather than politics, religion and education. But it gave the idea of compiling Jefferson's most important accomplishments together and reflecting them as a whole which would point out Jefferson's republican philosophy. The Declaration of Independence, Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and the University of Virginia are Jefferson's accomplishments that are mostly reflected in historians' works, but they have never been pointed out altogether to show Jefferson's republican philosophy which had its roots in the ancients that he mixed with the liberal ideas of his contemporaries. Jefferson was a European while compiling these ideas together, but he was an American when he was putting them into practice. The New World turned out to be the soil where European ideas flourished according to the needs of the citizens of the newly established republic of Jefferson, America.

³ Appleby, Joyce, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass.: Cambridge, UP, 1992), p. 291-320.

CHAPTER I

THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE

Pro Patria Eiusque Libertate

First among the three important achievements which Thomas Jefferson chose to be written on his gravestone is the Declaration of Independence which was adopted by Congress on July 4, 1776. The Declaration of Independence is a crucial document to comprehend the political philosophy of Thomas Jefferson, and the phases of the alteration of the document reflect the social and the political conditions of the American colonies during the time when the Declaration of Independence was adopted by Congress.

The Formation of the Declaration of Independence

The date July 4, 1776, is regarded as the time when the Declaration of Independence was written and accepted as an act of independence. On the contrary, it took a lot of time for Thomas Jefferson and the Committee of Five—especially for Jefferson—to compose the document which is accepted as the original Declaration of Independence today. In *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* the editor of the book includes three different drafts of the Declaration of Independence not accepted by the Committee or by Congress, and finally, the Declaration of Independence as adopted by Congress.¹

¹ Julian P. Boyd, ed. *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol.1, 1760-1776*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1950), p. 413.

Before writing the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson devoted much of his effort to drafts of the Virginia Constitution. Virginia was his home state, and he was in search of a constitution which would help Virginians have a democratic state in which everyone would have equal rights. Jefferson feared the development of a superior social class, or an aristocracy, in Virginia. But during the time of the adoption of the state constitution, Jefferson was in Philadelphia not in Williamsburg, and his absence was one of the reasons for the adoption of George Mason's Declaration of Rights. Jefferson and Mason's drafts included common items, but they had crucial differences. Historian Willard Sterne Randall gives a detailed description of these differences. Both Jefferson and Mason's plans included the division of the government into three branches, freedom of the press and elections and trial by jury, but Jefferson objected, in his own words, to Mason's "uninspired prose". In brief, the Virginia Constitution was deeply conservative, keeping power in the hands of the planter oligarchy retaining the property ownership qualification for voting, and generally keeping power in the hands of fewer than one-tenth of one percent of the population.² Jefferson's draft, on the other hand, stressed the importance of individual rights. His Virginia Constitution contained the rights of citizens against totalitarian control, the importance of a broad-based suffrage, the development of the West in the hands of independent farmers, decent treatment of the Indians, abolition of primogeniture and entail, and the control of military authority

² Willard Sterne Randall, *Thomas Jefferson: A Life* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1993), p. 268.

by elected civilians.³ In short, there is a strong connection between the Declaration of Independence and Jefferson's Virginia Constitution. It can be argued that if the Constitution was a tree, then the Declaration was its fruit and the owner of both the tree and its fruit was Thomas Jefferson. The relation between the two texts can be seen in a detailed comparison:

THE VIRGINIA CONSTITUTION

(3rd Draft)

Whereas George Guelf King of Great Britain & Ireland and Elector of Hanover, heretofore entrusted with the exercise of the kingly office in this government, hath endeavored to pervert the same into a detestable and insupportable tyranny; by putting his negative on laws the most wholesome & necessary for ye. public good by denying to his governors permission to pass laws of immediate & pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation for his (con) assent, and, when so suspended, neglecting to attend to them for many years: by refusing to pass certain other laws, unless the persons to be benefited by them would relinquish the inestimable right of representation in the legislature: by dissolving legislative assemblies repeatedly and

THE DECLARATION

(Composition Draft)

Whereas George Guelph King of Great Britain & Ireland Elector of Hanover, heretore entrusted with the exercise of the Kingly office in this government, hath endeavored to pervert the same into a detestable & insupportable tyranny

1. by (neg) putting his negative on laws the most wholesome & necessary for the public good (has kept some colonies without judiciary establmts)
2. by denying to his governors permission to pass laws of (the most) immediate & pressing importance, unless suspended in their operation for his (con)assent &, when so suspended, neglecting (for m) to attend to them for many years:
3. by refusing to pass certain other laws, unless the persons to be

³ Fawn M. Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*, 12th ed., (New York: Bantam Books, 1985), p. 138.

continually for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people: when dissolved, by refusing to call others for a long space of time, thereby leaving the political system without any legislative body head; by endeavoring to prevent the population of our country & for that purpose obstructing the laws for the naturalization of foreigners & raising the conditions of new appropriations of lands; by keeping among us in times of peace standing armies & ships of war; by affecting to render the military independant of & superior to the civil power,⁴

benefited by them would relinquish the inestimable right(s) of representation in the legislature:

(judges dependant)

4. by dissolving legislative assemblies repeatedly & continually for opposing with manly firmness his invasions on the rights of the people:

5. when dissolved, by refusing to call others for a long space of time, thereby leaving the political system([in a state of dissolution]) without any legislative (body) head:

6. by endeavoring to prevent the population of our that purpose obstructing the laws [for the naturalization] encouraging the importn of foreigners & raising the conditions of new appropriati(ng)ons (new) of lands: refused judiciary establmts to some without unjust & partial judges dependant erected swarms of offices
7. by keeping among us in times of peace standing armies & ships of war:
8. by affecting to render the military independent & superior to the civil power.⁵

Both of the lists continue in nearly the same manner. Later, the Declaration of Independence turned out to be a document which started with the famous words, "When in the course of human events, it becomes

⁴ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, p. 356-7.

⁵ Ibid., p. 417-8.

necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another...".

The period of time when the Committee of Five made alterations on the Declaration can clearly be seen in Jefferson's "Notes of Proceedings in the Continental Congress". In short, that was the time when the Declaration took its final form and an evidence to point out the fact that Jefferson wrote the Declaration free from the influences outside. These notes include the dates between June 7 and August 1, 1776. The third draft of the Virginia Constitution was written by Jefferson before June 13, 1776 and the Constitution was adopted by the Convention on June 29, 1776. In his notes of proceedings Jefferson stated that "(the declaration) was accordingly done and being approved by them (the committee), I reported it to the house on Friday the 28th."⁶ This date indicates the fact that Jefferson prepared the draft before the adoption of the Virginia Constitution which has a lot of sentences in common with the Declaration. He sent it to Virginia, but Mason's draft was accepted. In brief, there was a very short time between the two texts written by Jefferson, and there is no doubt that both belonged to him. Also, the parts where the reasons for declaring independence and the rights that "nature's god entitled" were put into the Declaration by Jefferson. Jefferson drew a clear line about the authorship of the Declaration of Independence. Forty-seven years later he told James Madison that: "they (the Committee) unanimously pressed on myself alone to undertake the draught, I consented it; I drew it."⁷ If the list above in which King George's

⁶ Ibid., p. 313.

⁷ Randall, *Thomas Jefferson*, p.267.

usurpations were given was the development part of the Declaration, so the first three paragraphs were the introductory part. Jefferson in a very simple and clear style declared that it was the colonies' right to declare independence since everyone inherited certain rights by birth which were given by God, not a sovereign.

The Declaration of Independence does not speak of citizenship, but it lays the groundwork for it in proclaiming as a self-evident truth "that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness" and "that to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among men."⁸ The American colonies reached the decision "to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another" because, as Jefferson mentioned, "their British brethren were deaf to the voice of justice & of consanguinity" and "[they] might have been a free and a great people together; but a communication of grandeur & of freedom it seems is below their dignity."⁹ In short, governments had secondary importance compared to the natural rights of mankind. Regardless of nationality, every human being had those rights, but the British brothers of the colonists were not aware of that fact and forced Jefferson and his contemporaries to declare independence. From this perspective, the Declaration of Independence was not a nationalist document that declared the rights of American citizens. It was the Fourteenth Amendment, ratified on July 28, 1868, which transformed the rights of men into the rights of U.S. citizens; federal governments then

⁸ Josiah Ober and Charles Hedrick, eds., *Demokratia: A Conversation on Democracies, Ancient and Modern*, (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996), p. 50.

began to protect the rights of American citizens.¹⁰ In 1776 Jefferson declared the God given rights of men to the British who were taking these rights from the colonists that they governed.

These unalienable rights did not only belong to white people according to Jefferson. There was a paragraph about slavery in the Declaration which was not accepted by the Committee. In the "Notes of Proceedings" Jefferson gave all the details about the reasons of this disapproval. In fact, that paragraph, reflects the universality of his views and is an important evidence for anti-slavery in the antebellum period:

He has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating it's [sic] most sacred rights of life and liberty in the persons of a distant people who never offended him, captivating & carrying them into slavery in another hemisphere or to incur miserable death in their transportation thither. this [sic] piratical warfare, the opprobrium of *infidel* powers, is the warfare of the *Christian* king of Great Britain. determined [sic] to keep a market where *Men* should be bought & sold, he has prostituted his negative for suppressing every legislative attempt to prohibit or to restrain this execrable commerce. and [sic] that this assemblage of horrors might want no fact of distinguished die, he is now exciting those very people to rise in arms among us, and to purchase that liberty which he has deprived them, by murdering the people on whom he also obtruded them: thus paying of former crimes committed against the liberties of one people, with which he urges them to commit against the *lives* of another.¹¹

This passage is mostly unknown to readers of the Declaration of Independence, and its meaning is clear. Jefferson, apart from King George's tyranny in the American colonies mentioned another crime, slavery. There is an important point in this crime; it was being done against "human nature itself." Jefferson did not give any privilege to any race or nation. Apart from that crime, the king of England was prompting the slaves to revolt against their owners in America. In that fight, both

⁹ Jay Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence: Jefferson, Natural Language & the Culture of Performance*,

¹⁰ Ober and Hedrick, *Demokratia*, p. 51.

sides were innocent and never offended him, but King George was trying to take their "liberties" and "lives".

Jefferson described the reasons for and the result of slavery in these lines thoroughly, but this paragraph was not accepted by the Committee.

He pointed out the reason in "Notes of Proceedings":

the clause, too, reprobating the enslaving the inhabitants of Africa, was struck out in complaisance to South Carolina & Georgia, who had never attempted to restrain the importation of slaves, and who on the contrary still wished to continue it. Our northern brethren also I believe felt a little tender (*on that*) under those censures; for tho' their people have very few slaves themselves, yet they had been pretty considerable carriers of them to others.¹²

This passage simply reflects the conditions of slavery in America during the late 1770s; there were not too many people who would desire to end slavery. Jefferson tried to forbid it, or at least to prevent its expansion in other states by the Ordinance of 1784 which stated that after 1800 there should be "neither slavery nor involuntary servitude" in any newly created state.¹³ For this law, Jefferson got six votes and it was not accepted. If Jefferson had won this vote perhaps there would have been no Civil War and no need for an Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. Civil war was one of Jefferson's fears since people were being divided into camps and that would end "in the extermination of the one or the other race."¹⁴ In brief, Jefferson was not an anti-slavery leader in modern sense. He had his own slaves and never had the idea of being equal with them. Blacks were a different group of people and had to live on their own, far from whites.

¹¹ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, p. 317-8.

¹² Ibid., p. 314-5.

¹³ Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, p.230. Jefferson later passed a "no slavery" provision in the Northwest Ordinance in 1787, but its results are controversial.

“All men are born free,” and they had rights by birth for Jefferson, but that did not really mean that they were all equal. They only had rights, and they should live in their own environment. Blacks were a different group of people. In contrast to the Declaration or the Ordinance of 1784, in his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, which is a work that gives a full description of the natural resources and animals and plants in Virginia, Jefferson compared white and black men physically and reached the conclusion that whites were superior to blacks; they were more beautiful. He regarded that comparison as normal since every creature, “horses, dogs and domestic animals” were compared according to their beauty, why should not mankind be?¹⁵

In brief, Jefferson had revolutionary ideas about African slaves like giving them their freedom. He thought that slavery was a crime against the human race by King George, who was also trying to turn the American colonists into slaves. Jefferson further believed that blacks had the right to have education, to have families and to live in their own societies, but in a far away land like the West Indies or Africa. Jefferson endorsed the idea of colonization for free blacks and emancipated slaves. Also, by doing this he would show the whole world that Americans would let people colonize in order to set them free, not to make them servants. Through colonization, he would both end slavery in America, which was a crime against mankind, and he would point out the fact that the colonies would give freedom to people who colonize. But he could not end

¹⁴ Ibid, p.190.

¹⁵ Richard K. Matthews, *Thomas Jefferson: A Revisionist View*, (Kansas: UP of Kansas, 1986), p. 69.

slavery, and moreover he never set his own slaves free. In short, the issue of slavery was and remained a paradoxical point in Jefferson's life.

Another paradoxical issue in Jefferson's life involved the Native Americans. When declaring independence in 1776 he stated that:

he (the king) has endeavored to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers the merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, & conditions of existence:¹⁶

The fact that the Declaration was written against the King of England should never be forgotten, and a thorough analysis of the passage about "the merciless Indians" will reveal Jefferson's real aim: Indians were everywhere and their "known rule of warfare [was] an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes, & conditions of existence". With these words, Jefferson emphasized the fact that Indians could as easily kill the soldiers of King George as they could kill the colonists; the Native Americans were superior in warfare. In brief, rather than reflecting Indians as savages, Jefferson's main aim in writing that passage could be to warn the British king against the danger of losing the war with the Native Americans.

Thus Jefferson might be seen as liking the Native Americans to a degree, at least. There were two reasons for this like. First, Indians were the closest group to "natural man" as well as being the natives of America where slaves were imports. Richard Matthews in *Thomas Jefferson: A Revisionist View* reflects all the factors which led Jefferson to consider Indians superior to African slaves. For example, while comparing "whites, reds and blacks", Jefferson never stated that Indians were inferior to

¹⁶ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, p. 425.

whites; they were nearly equal in every aspect. In *Notes on the State of Virginia* Jefferson mentioned that Indians had an equal beauty with whites, and they had established a well-organized society with only a few positive laws, because shared ideals, customs, and pasts could bind these untainted men together with a bond of affection and friendship.¹⁷ This description was also the description of the “natural man”; Indians were a kind of positive evidence to reflect Jefferson’s ideas about man’s nature. People are born with virtues, and Indians symbolized good virtuous citizens who were not corrupted with the results of industrialization like the most of the Europeans. They were a perfect example for his agrarian society where individual farmers prospered with their own efforts for both their and their country’s welfare.

The part in which the Native Americans were praised in *Notes on the State of Virginia* was also an answer to a European writer who portrayed Indians as savages without any knowledge or customs. Apart from declaring that American mammals were smaller than those in the Old World, Comte de Buffon stated that American Indians “lack ardor for females”, and “they love their parents and children but little”.¹⁸ Jefferson strongly opposed these thoughts in his *Notes*, and stated that none of the living creatures in America were inferior, and the Indians were brave people. He definitely admired Native Americans and despite the fact that Virginia law forbade intermarriage with Indians, on December 21, 1808, Jefferson declared to a group of Delawares, Mohicans and Munries Jefferson declared that “You will mix us by marriage, your blood will run

¹⁷ Matthews, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 64.

¹⁸ Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 191-2.

in our veins, and will spread with us over this great island."¹⁹ In that way, by mixing blood with Indians, Jefferson would gain a great help in creating his virtuous republican society. Also, mixing blood with Native Americans would give Americans that had migrated from Europe the chance the blood of the natives of the continent in their veins.

The second reason for Jefferson's admiration for the Native Americans, apart from his sympathy towards all genuine Americans, was related to Europe. Of course, not all European thinkers shared ideas of Buffon about America and its natives. The influence of naturalism opened the way to question the origin of the "noble savage" in the New World. What was their native land? The theory that Carthaginians who had reached Carolina with their ships were the ancestors of the Indians had many supporters. Edward Rutledge confessed to Jefferson in 1787 that he was almost persuaded that the Carthaginian theory was the right one.²⁰ Jefferson could shared the same idea that in fact Indians were the grandsons of men of the ancient world. Perhaps that was why that had a virtuous society; their ancestors brought those ideas with them.

If the native Americans had migrated from Europe to America, so did the American colonists had those rights since they were immigrants like the Indians, and for Jefferson, they had the right to be independent and to declare rights in America. A Summary View of the Rights of British America is the first document that was written by Thomas Jefferson which included the notion of independence in a hidden sense. Jefferson

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 587.

wrote *A Summary View* two years before the Declaration of Independence, in July 1774. It was a polite threat to the British King, and there is a clear difference between the words that were used in these two documents. For example, phrases like "British America" and "his majesty" in *A Summary View* were transformed, in two years, to "America" and "King George." It is clear that Jefferson had the idea of independence and rebellion on his mind, and in contrast to the idea that he composed the Declaration in a little more than two days, he created over a period of time the conditions in his mind about America's independence. It was also a rehearsal for the Declaration. If the Declaration was the conclusion of the evolution of the thought of independence in Jefferson's mind, then the Virginia Constitution was the developmental stage whereas *A Summary View* was the introduction. These three documents should be regarded as the parts of a whole.

A Summary View showed Jefferson's courage in telling King George what he could and could not do in America.²¹ And different from the Declaration, it is also a document in which Jefferson mentioned property rights of the American colonists. Jefferson declared to the king that the individual's expenditure of his energy, his labor and his blood gives him civil property rights that an English sovereign cannot invade.²² Also, similar to the Declaration, Jefferson claimed that oppressions by Parliament "too plainly prove a deliberate and systematic plan of reducing

²⁰ Commager, Henry Steele, *The Empire of Reason: How Europe Imagined and America Realized the Enlightenment*, (Garden City, New York: Anchor Press/ Doubleday, 1977), p. 74.

²¹ Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 119.

²² Matthews, *Thomas Jefferson: A Revisionist View*, p. 2

[them] to slavery.”²³ In the Declaration, Jefferson secured the rights of man by presenting slavery as a crime done against human beings and by stating that King George was trying to show whites as the enemies of blacks; his main aim was turn the colonists into slaves using every available force in America. Also, in A Summary View, Jefferson mentioned that King George was sending armed troops to America; “instead of subjecting the military to the civil power”, the king was acting in a manner that was “criminal against [their] laws.”²⁴ This was also criminal to the natural laws, and Jefferson concluded by declaring that “The God who gave us life, gave us liberty at the same time; the hand of force may destroy, but cannot disjoin them.”²⁵

The Declaration of Independence was the first of the important accomplishments that Jefferson had in his life time, but he was also accused of plagiarism. Obviously, Jefferson’s style is clear in A Summary View, the draft of the Virginia Constitution and the Declaration. But John Adams seemed to ignore this when he said that “there is not an idea in it, but what had been hackneyed in Congress for two years before, the substance of it is contained in the Declaration of rights...in the Journal of Congress in 1774.”²⁶ For Jefferson, however, drafting the Declaration of Independence did not demand any great originality of thought or scholarship; its object was to rally its colonial readers, to set down for all

²³ Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1992), p. 156.

²⁴ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, p.134.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 135.

²⁶ Fliegelman, Jay, *Declaring Independence*, p. 164.

to see the justification for the steps the colonies were taking.²⁷ Jefferson never copied any other document; he only mixed all the necessary thoughts and philosophies to create a convenient style for Americans; he surely had philosophical influences. The Declaration was "an expression of the American mind" and works of "Aristotle, Cicero, Locke, Sydney, etc." were used in it; it was written on Dutch paper watermarked *Pro Patria Eisque Libertate* (for the country and its independence) which reflected the character of the document.²⁸ One of the main influences on Jefferson was the Ancient Constitution and its principles that were largely reflected in A Summary View and in the Declaration.

The Ancient Constitution and the Declaration of Independence

Thomas Jefferson wrote the Declaration of Independence of Americans, but he drew inspiration from European thinkers, and sometimes, European ancestors. "We have reminded them of the circumstances of our emigration and settlement here." This sentence from the Declaration of Independence recalls Jefferson's thoughts about the conditions of emigration from Britain that he expressed in A Summary View of the Rights of British America:

That their Saxon ancestors had, under this universal law, in like manner left their native wilds and woods in the north of Europe, had possessed themselves of the Island of Britain, then less charged with inhabitants, and had established there that system of laws which has so long been the glory and protection of that country...America was conquered and her settlements made and firmly established at the expense of individuals, and not of the British public.²⁹

²⁷ Trevor Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience: Whig History and the Intellectual Origins of the American Revolution*, 2nd ed., (Indianapolis, Indiana: Liberty Fund, 1998), p. 202-3.

²⁸ Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, p. 165.

²⁹ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 1, p. 121-2.

The Saxon ancestors that Thomas Jefferson boasted about can be regarded as a clue to the influence of the Ancient Constitution and the English Whigs on his thoughts. The Whigs in England were in search of an "Anglo-Saxon democracy" which would be completely free from the influence of Normans who had brought feudalism to the island with their conquest. In the years of the American Revolution, the arguments of Whiggish historians were converted into intellectual weapons by Americans; Tacitus' *Germania*, in which the Saxon *witan* was depicted as the original of parliaments, was discovered by the Whigs.³⁰ *Germania* is a short work in which Tacitus described the life style, customs, habits and geography of the Germanic people. These people chose their own kings and generals; they were not living in cities; "they lived separated and scattered"; the interest of many was "unknown"; and each slave was "master of his own residence and his own home."³¹ Jefferson's vision of an agrarian society in America clearly owed much to Tacitus' *Germania*.

Tacitus was not the only writer that influenced Jefferson. A Summary View was powerfully influenced by Obadiah Hulme. Hulme's *Historical Essay* contains the phrases "our Saxon forefathers" and their "free constitution" like A Summary View, and Hulme also advised annual elections to end corruption.³² David Hume and Benjamin Franklin's friend Scot Lord Kames reflected nearly the same thoughts as Hulme about Saxons and their "true social democracy."³³

³⁰ Colbourn, *Lamp of Experience*, p.8.

³¹ Tacitus, *Agricola, Germany, and Dialog on Orators*, (Norman: Univeristy of Oklahoma Press, 1991), p. 70-6.

³² Colbourn, *Lamp of Experience*, p.64, 208.

³³ Ibid., p. 35.

Jefferson adopted this ideology and concluded that before emigration, the ancestors of Americans had a system based on equality and freedom, so it was their right to be independent. The kings of Britain, after the Glorious Revolution starting with William III, did not do anything to bring back the original political system to the inhabitants of Britain, and King George was no different. He was the "Guelph King of Hanover" as Jefferson stressed in the Declaration; he would never bring back the old Saxon laws.

In *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law*, J. G. A. Pocock mentions that:

Thomas Jefferson wanted to place Hengist and Horsa on the Great Seal of the United States, and he argued in the *Rights of British America* (1775) that American settlers held their lands by conquest like the Angles and Saxons, and therefore held them allodially, under no allegiance to the king.³⁴

In brief, the Ancient Constitution became Jefferson's main evidence for independence from the British Kingdom. Placing Hengist and Horsa, who had had a great share in the Anglo-Saxon conquest of Britain on the Great Seal, would signify complete independence from Britain.

34 J.G.A. Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987), p.337.

John Locke and the Declaration of Independence

If the Ancient Constitution reflects the old values and republicanism in Jefferson's mind, Locke was the symbol of the newly established political thoughts in relation with the liberalism for Jefferson. John Locke was one of the influential figures in politics during the eighteenth century. His liberalism had more effect in countries like the United States where there was a sense of an oppressive king who was putting prohibitions on the rights of the people. Therefore, Lockean liberalism became an important source for Jefferson's Declaration of Independence apart from the Ancient Constitutions of the Saxons. To the extent native Saxons possessed any organized society and government, it was tribal and chieftain rather than the ideal liberal order of John Locke.³⁶ Jefferson used both the Ancient Constitution and Locke's liberalism in establishing his political philosophy. He mingled republicanism and liberalism to create his own ideas.

As might be expected, Jefferson strongly rejected the idea that he copied from Locke's *Second Treatise*. In one of his letters to James Madison, he wrote that "I know only that I turned to neither book nor pamphlet while writing it."³⁷ Throughout his life, Jefferson faced this kind of accusation about the Declaration and its originality. Garrett Ward Sheldon, in his book, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson*, makes a comparison between the Declaration and *The Second Treatise* and concluded that there is a striking similarity between the two documents. Nevertheless, Jefferson's Declaration did not resemble

³⁶ Garrett Ward Sheldon, *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), p. 35.

Locke's in every manner; only certain phrases like "nature", "all equal and independent", and "the law of Nature" are the same. Obviously, Jefferson was influenced by Locke's liberalism and had read *The Second Treatise* before preparing the Declaration of Independence. Locke was one the thinkers that he really admired and *The Second Treatise* or "Locke on Government" was one of the books on politics that he recommended to his nephew, Peter Carr in 1771.³⁸

In *The Political Philosophy of Thomas Jefferson*, Sheldon distinguishes three groups of similarities between the thought of Jefferson and Locke: natural law, government and revolution. On the surface, Jefferson's ideas about these three subjects seem to be very close to Lockean liberalism, but there are some details that make his philosophy different from liberalism.

Locke developed his thoughts about free society during a time when revolutions were occurring against monarchies. For Locke, a king did not have any right to control other people since everybody was born with natural rights and should live their lives according to natural law. These rights of "life, liberty, and estate" were given by birth, and nobody had the right to limit them. Jefferson shared with Locke this idea that everybody, or at least most people, had equal rights and was independent. These rights were theirs by birth, and independence was the natural character of Americans since before migrating to America. Their ancestors were similarly independent and equal. Up to this point, there is no difference between Locke and Jefferson. All men were created equal; the world was

³⁷ Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 143.

³⁸ Randall, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 164.

created according to a natural law by God; and man's freedom was a part of this law. The phrase "we hold these truths to be sacred & undeniable" in the original rough draft of the Declaration of Independence can easily be regarded as a reflection of the natural rights that were given by God to mankind. Therefore, they were sacred and undeniable.³⁹ Jefferson thought that the African slaves also had those rights, and his admiration for the Indians has already been noted. His enemy was the tyrant, and he supported all oppressed.

John Locke pointed out the fact that everybody was equal, and social ranks, in fact, were not real; they were created by the oppressors. Jefferson was also against the idea of aristocracy. That was why all of his life he disputed with Alexander Hamilton, who Jefferson regarded as a potential enemy to the independence of America and a lover of aristocracy and monarchy. Instead, Jefferson created the idea of "natural aristocracy". It was, for Jefferson, "the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the trust, and government of society."⁴⁰ Those natural aristocrats were the people who were capable of controlling the government instead of kings.

For Locke, a government was not an obligation; people would live better lives without governments, but since they came together and created a society, they could establish a system which would protect their lives. Jefferson shared these ideas with Locke; governments had to protect the rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. But Jefferson went further arguing that in order to achieve this, talented

³⁹ In *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson, vol 1, 1760-1776*, it is noted that "sacred & undeniable" was later changed to "self-evident", and the change has been attributed to Benjamin Franklin, p. 427-8.

people, "natural aristocrats", should control the governments. In this way, the independence and equality of every member of the society would be protected in the best manner since the natural aristocrats could be expected to work for order in a democratic society.

Revolution is the last area in which Jefferson shared ideas with Locke. Jefferson never opposed the idea of revolution; for example, he did not stand against Shay's Rebellion in 1787 since he thought that it was the people's right to rebel against unjust and oppressive deeds of government. This idea was based on Lockean liberalism which gave each individual the right to take up arms to punish the government.⁴¹ For Locke, there were two conditions when rebellions became justifiable: when the people who controlled the government did not deserve their positions and when people wanted to abolish the present government. The logic is very simple and very Lockean: when people did not want the government that they had established, they had the right to change it according to their own wish. Jefferson adopted the same ideology and reflected it in the Declaration of Independence. Americans had the right to rebel against tyranny which did not "derive its just power from the consent of the governed".

There are a lot of similarities between Locke and Jefferson, but a small detail reflects the depths of Jefferson's political ideology. It is obvious that Jefferson was really influenced by *The Second Treatise*, but there is a difference between his famous phrase, "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of

⁴⁰ Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 610.

⁴¹ James Tully, *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1993), p. 41.

Happiness” and Locke’s phrase, “life, liberty, and property.” For him, governments did not exist to protect property, but rather to promote excess to property or, more broadly speaking, opportunity.⁴² In *American Virtues*, Jean M. Yarbrough argues for the influence of the Scottish school. Kames, Hutcheson, Smith and Hume on Jefferson.⁴³ Republican virtues, for Jefferson, replaced the ambition for property, and benevolence, “the desire to do good to others,” became important. A person’s happiness depended on the happiness of the whole, and people would only be happy if they had virtue. Self-preservation was not the most important thing in a person’s life. In brief, the system of Locke did not completely fit the republican ideals of Jefferson that imposed moral responsibilities on people who would be happy by living according to the rules of moral virtue.

Machiavelli, Montesquieu and The Declaration of Independence

Jefferson shared ideas with Locke about man’s natural rights, but not ideas about civic-humanism which, as “denotes a style of thought ... in which it is contended that the development of the individual towards self-fulfillment is possible only when the individual acts as a citizen that it as a conscious and autonomous participant in an autonomous decision taking politicalcommunity.”⁴⁴

Also, some historians share the same idea with J.G.A. Pocock that

⁴² Appleby, “What is Still American in Jefferson’s Political Philosophy?” , p. 304.

⁴³ Jean M. Yarbrough, “The Declaration and the American Character” in *American Virtues: Thomas Jefferson on the Character of a Free People*, (Kansas: UP of Kansas, 1998), p. 1-27.

⁴⁴ Matthews, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 89.

American revolution was the last great act of the Renaissance.⁴⁵

Machiavelli was the European who had created new political ideas during the Renaissance, and Americans were the people who resulted it in the New World. Returning to the old values and system of Rome was the main ideal of Machiavelli and with the execution of Charles I in England, that ideology became popular, if not successful. Jefferson, however, probably did not learn the principles of classical republicanism from Machiavelli, but indirectly from English writers. In *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson* there is little mention of Machiavelli, only in two places and both after the Revolutionary War ended. One is in a letter written to James Madison on May 7, 1784 in which Jefferson mentioned John F. Mercer's—ironically, he was one of his conservative rivals—"fondness for Machiavelli," and the other one comes in a letter written on July 22, 1792 that mentioned that he did not have Machiavelli's book along with Locke's, Sydney's, Milton's, etc.⁴⁶ From these two letters one can reach the conclusion that Jefferson read Machiavelli, but after writing the Declaration.

But Machiavelli was another thinker who supported the idea of rebellion. Not, however, to alter a government that was disliked, but "to return to the first principles in order to restore republican governments to their original purity." That return was not going to be "a symbolic return...but an actual attempt to rekindle the spirit and power of the Founding."⁴⁷ *The Prince* was about monarchies and *the Discourses* about republics. By uttering the word "republic", Machiavelli did not mean big

⁴⁵ Fliegelman, *Declaring Independence*, p. 186.

⁴⁶ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson* vol. 7 & 20, p. 228 and 663.

countries, but cities like his city, Florence. By the end of the twelfth century, there were republican governments in the major cities of *Regnum Italicum*, and those cities were controlled by chief magistrates called *potestas* who had supreme power but who were elected for six months or at most a year.⁴⁸ By the time Machiavelli was born and had grown up, all those city states had begun to collapse. Machiavelli found the reason in the relation between “virtu” and “fortuna”; fortune became the main enemy of the virtue that was vital for politics. For Machiavelli, politics and virtue were inseparable. A city would only be powerful if there were good citizens and, as a result, good politics in it. Only by going back to the ancient times, would the glorious days return.

Jefferson had thoughts similar to Machiavelli's. He never supported the idea of too much wealth and believed in dividing the country into wards to enable people to have direct participation in government and education and to give every ward religious freedom. Also, Jefferson supported the idea of frequent elections since too much power could easily corrupt a man and harm the virtuous people. A loss of virtue would mean a decline in the happiness of society as well as the individual. Nevertheless, Jefferson never put politics into the center of a person's life as Machiavelli in an Aristotelian manner did; for Jefferson, man was a social being, politics can only be a part of his life since he had other needs.

Charles Louis de Secondat Montesquieu did for the latter half of the eighteenth century what Machiavelli had done for his century; he set the

⁴⁷ Yarbrough, *American Virtues*, p. 112.

⁴⁸ Skinner, Quentin, “Machiavelli's *Discorsi* and the Pre-humanist Origins of Republican Ideals” in *Machiavelli and Republicanism*, p. 121.

terms in which republicanism was to be discussed.⁴⁹ But their enemies were different. Machiavelli was against the weak city governments in Italy; Montesquieu's enemy was Louis XIV. Also, Montesquieu supported the political system in Britain; the division of powers made the country "republics disguised as a monarchy". Montesquieu in *The Spirit of Laws* mentioned that Rome had had that kind of division of power.

Like most of the thinkers of the European Enlightenment, Montesquieu had a great influence on the founding fathers, especially on John Adams, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson. All three read Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* and made comments about it. John Adams compiled notes about the book; Thomas Jefferson used extracts from *The Spirit of Laws* in his *Commonplace Book*; and in 1792 James Madison, in an essay on "Spirit of Governments", compared Montesquieu's role in the science of government to that of Francis Bacon in natural philosophy.⁵⁰ Jefferson, in particular, obviously was influenced by his wide range of ideas about government, equality and laws. In a letter to Thomas M. Randolph on May 30, 1790, Jefferson praised Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws*:

In the science of government, Montesquieu's Spirit of Laws is generally recommended. It contains indeed a great number of political truths; but almost an equal number of political heresies; so that the reader must be constantly on his guard.⁵¹

What makes Montesquieu different from other thinkers, especially John Locke, is that he did not regard monarchy as the enemy of democracy or liberty. From this perspective, one might conclude that

⁴⁹ Shklar, Judith N., "Montesquieu and the New Republicanism" in *Ibid.*, p. 265.

⁵⁰ David Wallace Carrithers, ed., *The Spirit of Laws by Montesquieu*, p. xiii.

⁵¹ Boyd, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 16, p. 449.

Thomas Jefferson could not be influenced by the thoughts of Montesquieu, but a thorough study of *The Spirit of Laws* will reveal the fact that Jefferson and Montesquieu had the same enemy: tyranny and the tyrant. There is a difference between the thoughts of Jefferson and Montesquieu. Thomas Jefferson thought that the only way to achieve equality and democracy was to have a democratic government. For Montesquieu, people could be equal under the control of a good king as in the case of England.

The Spirit of Laws is the most well-known work of Montesquieu. The book resulted from a long study which began in 1734 and ended in 1757. The style of *The Spirit of Laws* is clear and refined, and the book was written in a manner to enlighten everybody, not only kings, princes, or others who govern a country as in the case of Machiavelli's *The Prince*. *The Spirit of Laws* consists of six parts and twenty-nine books. In each Montesquieu reflects different aspects of the laws. The first book's name is "Of Laws in General" and covers mostly the laws of nature. From this perspective, Montesquieu reflected no different thoughts from the liberals or Locke. The book starts : " Laws in their most general signification, are the necessary relations derived from the nature of things."⁵¹ He continues " The law which imprinting in our minds the idea of a Creator inclines us to him, is the first in importance, tho' not in order, of natural laws."⁵² The first part of the Declaration of Independence, apart from the influence of Locke's *Second Treatise*, consists of phrases like "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God" and "endowed by their Creator with certain

⁵¹ Carrithers, *The Spirit of Laws*, p. 101.

⁵² Ibid., p. 102.

unalienable rights" that reminds one of the words of Montesquieu. Also, in the Declaration, Jefferson used the phrase "we hold the rest of mankind, Enemies in War, in Peace Friends" which recalls the words of Montesquieu about the laws of nature, "peace would be the first law of nature." This peace is a result of man's desire for security and fear of his fellow man. Montesquieu agrees with Hobbes that men are independent and equal by nature because all men are more or less equally able to threaten one another."⁵⁴ And according to Montesquieu "when mankind enter into a state of society...the equality ceases, and then commences the state of war."⁵⁵ From the state of war emerges the positive laws that are useful to mankind in social life. During the time when the Declaration of Independence was adopted by the Congress, America was in a state of war since she had entered the period of forming a country and its laws by defeating tyranny.

The second book of *The Spirit of the Laws* is about the nature of the three different types of government. According to Montesquieu, "When the body of the people in a republic are possessed of the supreme power, this is called a *democracy*. In a democracy the people are in some respects the sovereign, and in the others the subject." This was the ideal form of government for Jefferson. Jefferson like Montesquieu thought that there were people who should govern a country with the consent of the governed, the natural aristocracy. But since too much power can easily corrupt people, a country should be divided into wards. Montesquieu and Jefferson shared the idea that republics had to be divided into wards in

⁵⁴ *The Spirit of Laws*, Book 1, Chapter 3, p. 103.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

order to be governed in the best way. The idea of divided power, “the classical model of a balanced constitution” was also shared by Jefferson and Montesquieu.

For Montesquieu, “the intermediate, subordinate and dependent powers, constitute the nature of monarchical government, that is, of that in which a single person governs by fundamental laws.”⁵⁶ In these governments, the controlling power is the nobility. “From the nature of a despotic power it follows that the single person invested with this power, commits the execution of it to a single person...(the despot) himself is everything, and his subjects nothing, is naturally lazy, voluptuous and ignorant.”⁵⁷ This description fits Jefferson’s description of King George in the Declaration of Independence :

He has refused his Assent to Laws, the most wholesome and necessary for the public. He has forbidden his governors to pass laws of immediate good and pressing importance, unless suspended their operation till his Assent should be obtained;...He has dissolved Representative Houses repeatedly, for opposing with manly firmness his invasion on the rights of people.⁵⁸

Too much power would lead the controllers of a country to despotism as in the case of England. Therefore, in *The Spirit of Laws*, Montesquieu suggested dividing the power of government into branches. His proposals for three branches and two houses had considerable influence on the framers of the American Constitution of 1787; Montesquieu’s influence was not only on Jefferson. But the enemies are different; Montesquieu supported England whereas Jefferson did not.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 112.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 114-5.

⁵⁸ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1, p. 413.

Montesquieu also mentioned that “Love of the republic in a democracy, is ... the love of equality in a democracy limits ambition to the sole desire, to the sole happiness of doing greater services to our country than the rest of our fellow citizens.”⁵⁹ This is related to the idea of “virtue” which cannot be found in monarchies and despotic governments. A parallel can be found in the thoughts of Jefferson. Virtuous citizens work for their country and some of them who have superior characteristics have also the ability to govern. “ When virtue is banished, ambition invades the hearts of those who are capable of receiving it.”⁶⁰ Machiavelli’s “fortuna” turned out to be “ambition” for Montesquieu.

Without virtue a republic cannot stand on its feet and will become like a monarchy, or worse, a despotic government. Therefore, Jefferson placed much importance on having virtuous citizens as well as independent and liberal people.

The Declaration of Independence, at first sight, seems an American document written for the independence of American nation. But the principles that lie beneath its formation are strongly related to European republican and liberal thinking that flourished with the Renaissance and included a lot of ideas like the Ancient Constitution and the ancient republican principles of Greece and Rome. Thomas Jefferson harmonized all these principles together and created a new way of American political thinking.

⁵⁹ Carrithers, *The Spirit of Laws*, p. 133.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 118.

CHAPTER II

THE STATUTE OF VIRGINIA FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

*For I have sworn upon the altar of
God eternal hostility against every
form of tyranny over the mind of
man (1800)*

Jefferson's most enduring legacy is the principle of religious freedom, defined as the complete separation of church and state.¹ The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom is a document that was written by Jefferson in order to establish religious freedom and enable people to choose any religion which they desired without the influence of clergy or any other religious leader. Jefferson, throughout his life, was never eager to express his religious thoughts in public since it was a part of his private life, but he was always regarded as an atheist because of what newspapers and his Federalist rivals said. Undoubtedly, Jefferson was not accepted as a good Christian during those times, especially in Virginia, and his religious thoughts were strongly related to his political and social ideals; religion was a man's private matter, but also it was an instrument to create the perfect citizen who should be beneficial to his country. The Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom was Jefferson's

¹ Ellis, Joseph J., *The American Sphinx* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), p. 291.

first step in creating a new system that was going to be useful to create his ideal society for America.

Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom was a document in which Jefferson declared the “natural right” of mankind to choose his or her own religion. God gave human beings free minds and religious freedom became one of the certain and natural rights of man. With the Statute, Jefferson aimed at establishing religious freedom and toleration in Virginia which later became a model for the whole country.² But it took a lot of time to make the Virginia Assembly adopt the bill. Jefferson introduced it on June 17, 1779, and it was finally adopted five years later. The strong opposition against the Statute was a natural reaction for a state like Virginia and James Madison was the person who worked hard to turn the bill into a law with making some alterations. When the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom passed as a law in 1786 Thomas Jefferson was still in Paris. James Madison informed him about the law on January 22, 1786, and Jefferson, in an excited manner, replied that the Statute “has been received with infinite approbation in Europe and propagated with enthusiasm.”³ And it was also printed in the same year in Paris, both in English and French.⁴ The Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom was an original, and for some people very radical, piece of work for both the Europeans and the Virginians. Later, it turned out to be an important work in the history of modern politics, since with it

² Padover, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 87.

³ Edwin S. Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William S. Edmons Publishing Company, 1996), p. 69.

⁴ Padover, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 87.

Jefferson aimed at the separation of the church from the state, giving freedom to every individual to choose his or her own religion.

In fact, the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom was not the first document of Thomas Jefferson about freedom of religion. As early as November 19, 1776, Jefferson drafted a set of "Resolutions for Disestablishing the Church of England and for Repealing Laws Interfering with Freedom of Worship." Jefferson was very clear in this draft and he simply declared that "Resolved that is the opn [opinion] of this Commee [committee] that so much of the sd.[said] petitions as prays [sic] that the establishment of the Church of England by Law in this Commonwealth may be discontinued, and that no pre-eminence may be allowed to any one religious sect over another, is reasonable... ." ⁵ The main enemy is clear in these sentences: England and her church. But later documents which Jefferson wrote in the same year reveal other factors besides England. It would be very easy to argue that Jefferson wanted to separate from the Church of England simply because it was the Church of England.

The real problem for Jefferson, however, was the formation of the church. "[In England] the bishops were always mere tools of the crown ... St. Peter gave the title of *Clergy* to all God's people till Pope Higinus ." ⁶ The things that Jefferson wanted to mention are very clear: Christianity was transformed into a different religion which became one of the main sources of the misconduct of England. Originally, it was a religion which gave the opportunity of religious freedom to everybody since the title of

⁵ Boyd, Julian P., ed., *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol 1, p. 530.

⁶ Ibid., 552.

clergy belonged to God's people; they had the right to make their own comments about their religion without the influence of a clergy that was controlled by the government or, simply, the king.

In the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, Jefferson mentioned that "Almighty God has created the mind free, and manifested His supreme will that free it shall remain by making it altogether insusceptible of restraints."⁷ Free minds meant free choice of religion which was given to mankind by God and nobody had the right to interfere with religious freedom. Freedom of religion could only be established by "each church being free, no one have jurisdiction over another,"⁸ and the result would be as "(Locke) says 'neither Pagan nor Mahamedan nor Jew ought to be excluded from the Civil Rights of the Commonwealth because of his religion'.⁹ For Jefferson, it was a part of his great plan of giving every right to individuals in a democratic society. Undoubtedly, for Jefferson, "religious freedom was not a privilege to be condescendingly bestowed but a natural right to be zealously preserved."¹⁰

Virginia and the Anglican Church

Jefferson was a devoted Virginian; he spent most of his life in Virginia, and in the times when he was not at "home" he felt home-sickness deeply. Therefore, most of his important plans were related to Virginia, like the Statute for Religious Freedom. It was a crucial task for Jefferson to establish religious freedom in his state since he considered the Anglican Church a great obstacle to liberty.

⁷ Boyd, *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 1

⁸ Ibid., p. 546.

⁹ Ibid., p. 548.

¹⁰ Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God*, p. 69.

From the time it was established as a British colony, Virginia's formal religion was Anglicanism which had once more become the formal religion of England with the restoration of monarchy in 1660. Thomas Jefferson was born and grew up in a state which had been established on strict rules but was trying to change. In *Sworn on the Altar of God*, Edwin S. Gaustad describes the atmosphere in Virginia:

Severe legislation passed in Jamestown in 1610 provided that all the people attend morning and evening prayer and that those who "shall often and wilfully absent themselves" from divine services be punished according to the law: lose a day's provisions for the first offence, be whipped for the second, and for the third be condemned to the oceangoing galleys for six months.¹¹

Rules were clear and strict in Virginia: anyone who behaved against Anglicanism would severely be punished. As well as that, the state was divided into parishes that were controlled by a clergyman and were directly under the control of the Bishop of London. In brief, the Anglican Church controlled Virginia in religious matters. That was one of the most important factors why Jefferson rejected the presence of the clergy class between the public and government.

In Query XVII, "On Freedom of Consience", in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson described Anglicanism, freedom of religion and conscience in detail. This part of the work is the only published statement of Jefferson's views about religion. After describing the period when the Anglican Church was at the height of its strength, Jefferson continued:

The Anglicans retained full possession of the country about a century. Other options began to creep in, and in the great care of the government to support their own church, having begotten an equal degree of indolence in its clergy, two-thirds of the people had become

¹¹ Ibid., p. 2-3.

dissenters at the commencement of present revolution.¹²

The problem appeared at that stage since the dissenters began to ask for their rights. Religious intolerance was becoming a tool of oppression, and for Jefferson that was not the way which would lead people to search for the truth about religion independently. Jefferson wanted a completely free environment in which everyone would have the chance to search for the truth. Thus in Query XVII of *Notes on Virginia* he wrote "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods, or no god. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."¹³ In later years, this sentence became one of the major sources for Jefferson's opponents to attack him about his religious opinions. Even in his presidential campaigns, the most harmful criticism of Jefferson was about his religion. For example, one clergyman said that a vote for Jefferson was a vote against Christianity.¹⁴

Jefferson never revealed his religious thoughts in public, except the one chapter in *Notes on the State of Virginia* and letters that he sent to his closest friends, but he was always seen as a heretic or an atheist. His general manner in regard to religious questions throughout his life was one of reticence, since he regarded these as a private concern.¹⁵ Jefferson was a man who strongly believed in freedom of conscience and religion. Once he declared that "I not only write nothing on religion, but rarely permit myself to speak on it, and never but in a reasonable

¹² Kay S. Walters, *The American Deists: Voices of Reason and Dissent in the Early Republic*, (Kansas: UP of Kansas, 1992), p. 111.

¹³ Ibid., p. 112.

¹⁴ Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 155.

¹⁵ Dumas Malone, *Jefferson and His Time: Jefferson the Virginian*, vol. 1, 2nd ed., (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1981), p. 106.

society.”¹⁶ That reasonable society consisted of a few people like Joseph Priestley, Benjamin Rush, John Adams and a few others. But this fact could not prevent criticism of Jefferson on the issue of religion and the accusation of atheism. In fact, contrary to the common opinion of his rivals, he believed in God, and he developed his own philosophy about Christianity.

Nature and Reason: Jefferson the Deist

In *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson mentioned that “Reason and free inquiry are the only effectual agents against error,”¹⁷ and “Reason and persuasion are the only practical instruments.”¹⁸ For Jefferson, since God was the god of nature, nature was the most important element in comprehending the origin of all religions or in other words, the real religion. Jefferson paid attention only to the things that he could see and feel. He was a naturalist, and nature was his laboratory in understanding the origin of creation:

our reason at last must ultimately decide as it is the only oracle which God has given us to determine between what really comes from him, and the phantasms of a disordered and deluded imagination. When he means to make a personal revelation he carries conviction of it's [sic] authenticity to the reason he has bestowed as the umpire of truth.¹⁹

Jefferson believed that reason as well as the other moral faculties were bestowed upon man by the Creator. Since God was the god of nature, he wanted humans to comprehend him in terms of nature in which everything is in order. Reason was one of the most important moral

¹⁶ Dickinson W. Adams, ed., letter to Charles Clay, Monticello, January 29, 1815, in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, (Princeton, N J: Princeton UP, 1983), p. 363.

¹⁷ Walters, *The American Deists*, p. 113.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Dickinson, *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, letter to Miles King, Monticello, September 26, 1814.

qualities of man. Also, God did not give those qualities only to comprehend the environment, but also to reach happiness which was a crucial part of Jefferson's understanding of religion. Perhaps that element that made him an Epicurean:

He has formed us moral agents. Not that, in the perfection of his state he can feel pain or pleasure from anything we may do: he is far above: but that he may promote the happiness of those with whom he has placed us in society, by acting honestly towards all, benevolently to those who fall within our way, respecting sacredly their rights bodily and mental, and cherishing especially their freedom of conscience, as we value our own.²⁰

This short passage from one of Jefferson's letter reveals his religious philosophy. Jefferson had a kind of a Lockean understanding of God, which emphasizes the fact that God is above us and above our understanding, mixed with a different type of Epicureanism aiming at social as well as individual happiness that will be described more fully below. But, the main aim of these thoughts was to provide "freedom of conscience" to everybody in a society.

Jefferson thought that the "umpire of truth" could only be established with the assistance of reason, the mighty word of the eighteenth century Enlightenment, and truth, and indirectly reason, were related to morality which enlightened the way to the love of God:

Truth is certainly a branch of morality, and a very important one to society. But, presented as its foundation, it is as if a tree, taken up by the roots, has it's[sic] stem reversed in the air, and one of it's [sic] branches planted in the ground.—Some have made the *love of god* the foundation of morality.²¹

So from these lines, it can easily be comprehended that reason and then morality were the tools to comprehend reality that was hidden

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., letter to Thomas Law, Poplar Forest near Lynchburg, June 13, 1814, p. 355.

under mysticism. Jefferson never believed in miracles or any other phenomena which could not be explained by the senses and directly by reason:

I feel bodies which are not myself: there are other existencies then. I call them *matter*. I feel them changing place. This gives me *motion*. When there is an absence of matter, I call it *void* or *nothing*, or *immaterial space*. To talk of *immaterial* existences is to talk of *nothings*. To say that the human soul, angels, god are immaterial is to say there are *nothings*, or there is no god, no angels, no soul. I cannot reason otherwise, but I believe I am supported in my creed of materialism by Locke, Tracy and Steward. At what age of the Christian church this heresy of *immaterialism*, this masked atheism, crept in, I do not know.²²

With this passage, a new side of Jeffersonian theology, hatred towards immaterialism or mysticism, reveals itself. For some people, Jefferson was an atheist, but, for him, the "immaterialists" were atheists since they had transformed Christianity into a new form of religion from which they could easily benefit. Jefferson, in the above lines, mentions that he shares his materialism with Locke, Tracy and Steward. This also reveals the fact that Jefferson owed some parts of his religious philosophy to the thinkers of the Enlightenment.

Jefferson, of course, was not born a deist. On the contrary, he was born to an Anglican family, and ironically, a clergyman, James Maury was the first person who taught ancient languages, history and science to Jefferson. After Maury, William Small, the Scottish mathematician at the College of William and Mary introduced a new world to Jefferson in which, according to most Jefferson scholars, the Holy Trinity was transformed into the trinity of Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton and John Locke. From Bacon Jefferson learned to slough off the shackles of

Aristotle's science along with its deductive methods and replace these with a new science that turned to experience and induction. From Newton he learned that God's world was orderly, dependable, regular, predictable.²³ Finally, John Locke formed the philosophical side of Jefferson's new thinking; Locke taught him that religion was an issue related to the private world of man. For Locke, religion consisted of the inward persuasion of the mind; the Anglican Clergy had to be destroyed in order to set the mind free.²⁴

All these thinkers of the Enlightenment helped the expansion of Deism in America. Deism was a different religion from the other ones like Christianity, but it was also similar to them. The common characteristics of all religions, those which were not against the laws of nature and reason, became the basis for Deism. Believing in a God that could be understood by reason became the central idea of Deism, and many intellectuals in America and especially the two Founding Fathers, Franklin and Jefferson, were Deists during the eighteenth century.

In brief, Jefferson's religious ideas were misunderstood. He never declaimed against God and Christianity. The only thing that he strongly opposed was the "immaterialism" or "Platonic mysticism" of the clergy. That was the reason Deism prospered in America. In 1814, Jefferson mentioned that "I have observed generally that, while in protestant countries the defections from the Platonic Christianity of the priests is to

²² Ibid., letter to John Adams, Monticello, 15 August 1820, p. 400.

²³ Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God*, p. 20-1.

²⁴ Brodie, *Thomas Jefferson*, p. 155.

Deism, in Catholic countries they are to Atheism."²⁵ Jefferson was completely right in his words; America was a Protestant country in which Deism became powerful; France was a Catholic country in which Atheism developed as a reaction against the Catholic Church. Jefferson himself never supported Atheism. His main aim was to purify Christianity. He declared that "The sum of all religion as expressed by it's [sic] best preacher, 'fear god and love thy neighbor', contains no mystery, needs no explanation."²⁶

Jesus, Plato the Ancient Enemy and Religious Sects

For Jefferson, Jesus was not a sacred character. On the contrary, he believed that Jesus was a person who had devoted his life to the welfare of mankind. He had worked to show the virtuous way to reach a happy life. Jefferson never believed that Jesus could be the son of God or he had miracles because these ideas were against his scientific thinking. In a letter to Peter Carr, his sister's son, he wrote that:

You will next read the New Testament. It is the history of a personage called Jesus. Keep in your eye the opposite pretensions. 1. Of those who say he was begotten by god, born of a virgin, suspended and reversed the laws of nature at will, and ascended bodily into heaven; and 2. of those who say he was a man, of illegitimate birth, of a benevolent heart, enthusiastic mind who set out without pretensions to divinity, ended in believing them, and was punished capitally for sedition by being gibbeted according to the Roman law which punished the first commission of that offence by whipping, and the second by exile or death...²⁷

In the later years, Jefferson began to feel Jesus' moral leadership deeply, but he never accepted his divinity because, as mentioned above,

²⁵ Adams, *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, letter to Thomas Law, Poplar Forest near Lynchburgh, June 13, 1814, p. 355-6.

²⁶ Ibid., letter to George Logan, Poplar Forest near Lynchburg, November 12, 1816, p. 381.

²⁷ Boyd, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Paris, August 10, 1787.

divinity is a term which cannot be understood by the senses. But Jesus' moralism was important:

Jesus, taking for his type the best qualities of the human head and mind, wisdom, justice, goodness, and adding to them power, ascribed all of these but in infinite perfection, to the supreme being, and formed him really worth of their adoration.²⁸

Joseph Priestley's *Socrates and Jesus Compared* prompted Jefferson to reveal his religious thoughts in a small circle of friends. Joseph Priestley was an Englishman who had migrated to America because of his beliefs, and his book was published in Philadelphia in 1803. Jefferson sent him a letter on April 9, 1803 from Washington thanking Priestley for the copy of *Socrates and Jesus Compared* which he had given him.²⁹ Less than two weeks later, Jefferson sent a letter to Benjamin Rush which included Jefferson's own "Syllabus of an Estimate of the Merit of the Doctrines of Jesus, Compared with Those of Others."³⁰

In *Socrates and Jesus Compared* Priestley described the similarities and differences between Socrates and Jesus. Both of them were virtuous characters, but Jesus supported the idea of one god, and he performed miracles. Priestley also declared that Jesus had a sacred mission, and although Jefferson never accepted that idea, *Socrates and Jesus Compared* activated Jefferson to write his own ideas to his intimate friends. In his letter to Rush enclosing his syllabus, Jefferson stated that:

To the corruptions of Christianity, I am indeed opposed; but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. I am a Christian, in the

²⁸ Adams, *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, letter to William Short, Monticello August 4, 1820, p. 395.

²⁹ Ibid., letter to Joseph Priestley, Washington, April 9, 1803, p. 327.

³⁰ Ibid., letter to Benjamin Rush, Washington, April 21, 1803, p. 331.

only sense in which he wished anyone to be; sincerely attached to his doctrines, in preference to all others ... I received from Doct. Priestly his little treatise of 'Socrates and Jesus Compared.' This being a section of the general view I have taken of the field, it became a subject of reflection, while on the road, and unoccupied otherwise. The result was, to arrange in my mind, a Syllabus, or outline, of such an estimate of the comparative merits of Christianity, as I wished to see executed, by some one of more leisure and information for the task than myself.

The ancient philosophers "particularly Pythagoras, Socrates, Epicurus, Cicero, Epictetus, Seneca, Antoninus" were the most important philosophers of antiquity for Jefferson, but their philosophy was inadequate since they had put the individual at the center.³¹ "Benevolence" did not have a great meaning for these ancients and "In developing our duties to others, they were short and defective."³² The Jews believed in only one god, but "their Ethics were not only imperfect, but often irreconcilable [sic] with the sound dictates of reason and morality, as they respect intercourse with those around us: and repulsive, and anti-social, as respecting other nations."³³ In short, the Jews had a religion based on the principles of Deism, or Jefferson's Deism, but that religion could not be regarded as Deism since there was no reason, and as a result, no morality in it; there was need for an urgent reformation.

For Jefferson, Jesus was the person who appeared as the reformer among the Jews. Jefferson's description of Jesus in the "Syllabus" is not a conventional one; in fact, it was a little bit shocking for the people who criticized him:

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

His parentage was obscure, his condition poor, his education null, his natural endowments great, his life correct and innocent; he was meek, benevolent, patient, firm, disinterested, and of the sublimest eloquence ...His moral doctrines relating to kindred and friends were more pure and perfect ... He pushed his scrutinies into the heart of man; erected his tribunal in the region of his thoughts, and purified the waters at the fountain head.³⁴

Thus, for Jefferson, Jesus, obviously, was not a prophet, nor did he have divine characteristics and talents that were endowed by God; he was a human being who had “natural” talents that made Jesus a moral leader. His most important talent was, undoubtedly, his “benovelence”, the key virtue to become a perfect man according to Jefferson. This kind of approval, regarding Jesus as human, but endowing him superior moral characteristics led to charges of Atheism against Jefferson. On the contrary, however, he had a religious belief based on the idea of one God and the real and purified doctrines of Jesus. For Jefferson, Jesus was an excellent example of his “natural aristocrat” who had not had any education, but had superb moral qualities that showed the way to “the umpire of truth” to the Jews who had corrupted their religion with their immoral deeds. More than being the leader of the Jews, Jesus was the natural leader of all mankind since Jefferson believed that “Jesus embraced, with charity and philanthropy, our neighbors, our countrymen, and the whole family of mankind.”³⁵

“Syllabus of the Doctrines of Jesus” is a short work in which Jefferson compared Jesus with the ancient philosophers as well as the Jews. Jesus appears as the best religious leader and Christianity as the best religion, but, definitely, what Jefferson the Christianity of Jesus rather than that of

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

the priests. In brief, "Syllabus of an Estimate of the Merit of the Doctrines of Jesus, Compared with those of Others" is a document in which Jefferson presented his religious thoughts to his friends, not to the public. Jefferson, throughout his life, continued to write this sort of letter to his friends, but never made them public since he strongly believed in the idea of freedom of conscience. Nevertheless, the "Syllabus" is the first written documentation of Thomas Jefferson's religion. By comparing Jesus with the ancient philosophers and the Jews, Jefferson's idea was to show that Jesus was a real Deist like him. In other words, Jefferson was a follower of the universal doctrines that had made Jesus a Deist. In fact, Christianity was Deism, but it had become corrupted. In short, the doctrines of Jesus formed one basis of Jefferson's religion.

In the "Syllabus" Jefferson compared Jesus with most of the ancient philosophers except one: Plato. His name appears only once in the "Syllabus", in a hidden manner:

Hence the doctrines which he [*Jesus*] delivered were defective as a whole and fragments of what he did deliver have come to us mutilated, mistated and often unintelligible. They have been still more disfigured by the corruptions of schismatizing followers ... by engrafting on them the mysticism of a Gracian Sophist, frittering them into subtleties, and obscuring them with jargon, until they have caused good men to reject the whole in disgust, and to view Jesus himself as an Impostor.³⁵

For Jefferson, Platonic mysticism was guilty of transforming the real doctrines of Jesus into the religion of his "schismatic followers", the priests that Jefferson bitterly criticized. Jesus was not an impostor, but the mysticism of Plato had turned him into a supernatural being. His mystic way of understanding was against the rules of nature's god,

³⁵ Adams, *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, letter to Edward Dowse, Washington, April 19, 1803.

reason and morality, and the priests used that to complicate Christianity's meaning and make it less comprehensible to ordinary people:

The Christian priesthood, finding the doctrines of Christ levelled to every understanding, and too plain to need explanation, saw, in the mysticism of Plato, materials with which they might build up an artificial system which might, from its indistinctness, admit everlasting controversy, give employment for their order, and introduce it to profit, power and pre-eminence. The doctrines which flowed from the lips of Jesus himself are within the comprehension of a child; but thousands of volumes have not yet explained the Platonisms engrafted on them: and for this obvious reason that nonsense can never be explained. Their purposes however are answered. Plato is canonised; and it is now deemed as impious to question his merits as those of an Apostle of Jesus. He is peculiarly appealed to as an advocate of the immortality of the soul; and yet I will venture to say that were there no better arguments than his in proof of it, not a man in the world would believe it. It is fortunate for us that Platonic Republicanism has not obtained the same favor as Platonic Christianity; or we should now have been all living men, women and children pell mell together, like the beasts of the field or forest.³⁷

Platonism therefore damaged the ideal "universal Christianity," and its defects should be rectified as soon as possible according to Jefferson. The mysticism of Plato resulted in false and unreasonable attributes of Jesus that he was the son of God, for example, or that his mother was a virgin. Jefferson personally never believed these things since for him they were against nature and reason. Jesus was a moral leader, and his doctrines were the best in the history of mankind. Regarding Jesus, Jefferson's motto was "eradicate mystery and elevate morality."³⁸

After Platonic mysticism, John Calvin was the second most dangerous man in mystifying the Christian religion. In one of his letters, Jefferson

³⁶ Ibid., p. 332.

³⁷ Ibid., letter to John Adams, Monticello, July 5, 1814, p. 359.

³⁸ Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God*, p. 139.

mentioned that "Our saviour did not come into the world to save metaphysicians only."³⁹ In the same letter he also stated that "The truth is that Calvinism has introduced to the Christian religion more new absurdities than it's [sic] leader had purged it of old ones." Calvin had transformed the easily understandable doctrines of Jesus into a religion full of irrationality according to Jefferson. He always, especially in the last years of his life, opposed Calvinism as strongly as he opposed Platonism:

I can never join Calvin in addressing *his god*. He was indeed an Atheist which I can never be; or rather his religion was Daemonism. If ever man worshipped a false god, he did. The being described in his 5. points is not the God whom you and I acknowledge [sic] and adore, the Creator and benevolent governor of the world; but a daemon of malignant spirit.⁴⁰

Jefferson strongly opposed the doctrine of predestination and the doctrine of original sin since they were against reason. He believed that man was created with certain "moral agents"; he was created to live a virtuous life, not a miserable one. Calvin degraded the quality of mankind as well as Christianity and created his own religion.

In fact, Jefferson mentioned that the doctrines of Jesus were very clear and understandable:

The doctrines of Jesus are simple, and tend all to the happiness of man, that there is one God and he all-perfect: that there is a future state of rewards and punishment: that to love God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself, is the sum of religion.⁴¹

Jefferson, in these lines, reflected his opinion that Jesus' religion was for everybody, not for a certain group of people. As can be comprehended, benevolence is at the center of the thinking of Jesus; people should love

³⁹ Adams, *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, letter to Salma Hale, Monticello, July 26, 1818, p. 385.

⁴⁰ Ibid., letter to John Adams, Monticello, April 11, 1823, p. 410.

⁴¹ Ibid., letter to Benjamin Waterhouse, Monticello, June 26, 1822, p. 405.

their neighbors as they loved themselves. In brief, Jefferson's understanding of religion was the same as his understanding of politics: everybody had equal rights. Calvin's doctrines were completely different from Christianity:

that there are three gods:
that good works, or the love of our neighbor are nothing:
that Faith is every thing; and the more incomprehensible the proposition, the more merit in it's faith:
that Reason in religion is of unlawful use:
that God, from the beginning, elected certain individuals to be saved, and certain others to be damned; and that no crimes of the former can damn them, no virtues of the latter save.
... They [Calvinists] are mere Usurpers of the Christian name, teaching a Counter-religion, made up of the deliria of crazy imaginations, as foreign from Christianity as that of Mahomet.⁴²

Calvinism comprised all the negative religious motifs that Jefferson opposed. First of all, it departed from the most important virtue, benevolence. People, according to the Calvinist doctrine did not have to act benevolently to other people since they were chosen for salvation or damnation in advance, according to the doctrine of the Elect. Perhaps this was the worst item in Calvinism; Jefferson believed that the virtues of man would make him a good and moral man, but Calvin supported the opposite idea that people were elected before, and the good or the bad things that they did would not change anything. This belief in predestination did not fit into Jefferson's Deism, or in Jefferson's view, the doctrines of Jesus.

Jefferson once declared that "I am of a sect by myself, as far as I know."⁴³ The reason could lie in the fact that Jefferson did not believe in

the things that the priests told people; they said wrong things and created a defective Christianity:

It is the mere Abracadabra of the mountebanks calling themselves the priests of Jesus. If it could be understood it would not answer their purpose. Their security is in their faculty of shedding darkness, like the scuttle fish, through the element in which they move, and making impenetrable to the eye of a pursuing enemy. and there they will skulk, until some rational creed can occupy the void which their obliteration of their duperies would leave in the minds of our honest and unsuspecting brethren. Whenever this shall take place, I believe that Christianity may be universal and eternal.⁴⁴

Jefferson's aim can clearly be understood: he did not want a class of Clergy in the newly established United States. First, they represented sects which had their roots in Europe, especially in England as in the case of the Quakers. Second, they formed a privileged class which Jefferson's "honest and unsuspecting brethren" was obeying. Third, by dividing Christianity into sects, the priests created isolated religious groups hostile to each other, and that was the main cause of the destruction of the freedom of conscience, as in the case of the Anglican Church in Virginia. Apart from being the church of England, that church did not allow any other religious opinions in the state and when other sects, "dissenters," became powerful, they wanted to have their own privileges. Therefore, Christianity had to go back to its origin in the doctrines of Jesus. In a letter that he wrote to the leader of the Baptists of Danbury, who were persecuted since they were not Congregationalists, Jefferson stated that:

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God; that he owes account to none other for his faith or his

⁴² Ibid., letter to Benjamin Waterhouse, Monticello, June 26, 1822, p. 405.

⁴³ Ibid., letter to Ezra Stiles Ely, Monticello, June 25, 1819, p. 387.

⁴⁴ Ibid., letter to Francis Adrian van der kemp, Monticello, July 30, 1816, p. 378.

worship; met the legislative powers of the government reach actions to none and not options, I contemplate with sovereign relevance that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, "this building a wall of separation between Church and State." Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see the sincere satisfaction, the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore man to all of his natural rights...⁴⁵

Jefferson wanted to build a wall between the Church and the State, and he wanted everyone to be free to choose their religion. Nevertheless, his main aim was to reflect the superiority of the Christianity of Jesus and transform it into a universal religion. He declared that he was no sect and that he had a sect of his own, but in his papers, it seems that he did support one sect, Unitarianism. Perhaps it would not be appropriate to call it a "sect" since its main objective was to end the "three gods in one god" idea and unite them in one God or, in other words, to foster a belief in the unity of God since the trinity was against the rules of logic for Jefferson. Unitarianism was an idea developed by the writer of *Socrates and Jesus Compared*, Joseph Priestley. Unitarianism offers a good example of Jefferson's ideology of transforming European values into new ones that would obey American rules. From this perspective, supporting Unitarianism, a religious thought developed by a European living on American soil, instead of a European sect, was more suitable for Jefferson. Furthermore, like Priestley, Jefferson supported the unity of God. Therefore Unitarianism became the best way of religious thinking:

No one sees with the greater pleasure than myself the progress of Reason in it's [sic] advances towards rational Christianity. When we shall have done away the incomprehensible jargon of the trinitarian arithmetic that three are one and one is three; when we

⁴⁵ Thomas Jefferson on Separation of Church and State, (internet address), January 1, 1802.

shall have knocked down the artificial scaffolding, reared to mask from view the simple structure of Jesus, when, in short, we shall have unlearned every thing which has been taught since that day, and got back to the pure and simple doctrines he incalculated, we shall then be truly and worthily his disciples ... I have little doubt that the whole of our country will soon be rallied to the Unity of the Creator, and I hope, to the pure doctrines of Jesus also.⁴⁶

These lines, apart from reflecting Jefferson's sympathy towards Unitarianism, reflect the greatest paradox in Jefferson's religious philosophy. Contrary to his speeches in which he supported the freedom of conscience, believing in whatever a person wants, in the above lines he stated that he had the wish that one day everyone would believe in the doctrines of Jesus. Moreover, while standing against the ideology of Platonic Christianity, Jefferson admired another ancient philosopher and mingled his philosophy with the doctrines of Jesus.

Epicurus the Ancient Friend

In his letter to Benjamin Rush enclosing the "Syllabus of the doctrines of Jesus", Jefferson declared that "I am a Christian." But in a letter to William Short, he stated that "As you say of yourself, I am too an Epicurean. I consider the genuine (not imputed) doctrines of Epicurus as containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us."⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Adams, *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, letter to Francis Adrian van der Kemp, Monticello, July 30, 1816, p. 375.

⁴⁷ Ibid., October 31, 1819, p. 388.

Was Thomas Jefferson a Christian or was he in search of the old and ancient order that Epicurus offered? The answer would be yes to both of the questions. Jefferson was in search of a society in which people would behave according to the doctrines of Jesus in the purest sense with the assistance of the virtues which Epicurus believed would show the way to the personal happiness of the individual. These virtues would also be helpful in establishing the benevolent society that Jesus desired; happy, virtuous citizens forming a happy, virtuous, benevolent society.

The letter in which Jefferson declared that he was an Epicurean also included "A Syllabus of the Doctrines of Epicurus" in which Jefferson stated the main lines of Epicureanism as well as its virtues. After discussing Epicurus' thought about the universe, matter—which is nearly the same as Jefferson's ideas about matter and motion—and gods who, according to Epicurus were "not meddling with the concerns of the scale of beings below them", Jefferson continued stating that "Happiness is the aim of life. Virtue is the foundation of happiness; utility the test of virtue. Pleasure active and IN-DOLENT."⁴⁸ Then Jefferson continued with one of his favourite sentences and with the virtues of Epicurus:

Man is a free agent.

Virtue consists in

1. Prudence 2. Temperance 3. Fortitude 4. Justice

To which are opposed

1. Folly 2. Desire 3. Fear 4. Deceit⁴⁹

Those four virtues were the virtues that Jefferson wanted everybody to have. Apart from the moralistic ideals of Jesus, those virtues would easily lead free human beings to happiness.

⁴⁸ Ibid., letter to William Short, Monticello, October, 31, 1819, p. 390.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

By prudence, Jefferson meant intellectual prudence.⁵⁰ This was a virtue that would be very necessary for a statesman in a republic and that could only be gained by education. But, nevertheless, fortitude seems to be the most important virtue of all. "That [fortitude] teaches us to meet and surmount difficulties; not to fly from them, like cowards, and to flight too in vain, for they will meet and arrest us at every turn of our road."⁵¹ A short summary of Jefferson's life and a good sentence for a person who wants to be happy in both private and public spheres.

Jefferson, interestingly since he also knew ancient languages, stated that he used the *Syntagma* of Gassendi as a source for Epicurus' doctrines. Frenchman Pierre Gassendi in his work, *Syntagma Epicuri Philosophiae*, tried to introduce Epicureanism to the Christian world where the doctrines of Aristotle were preferred. "Gassendi secured a prominent place in contemporary philosophic enquiry and by encouraging seventeenth century men of science to look to Epicurean atomism as a reasonable hypothetical foundation for the investigation of nature."⁵² Gassendi reconciled Christianity with the atomistic philosophy of Epicurus. From this perspective, he became Jefferson's forerunner by nearly a century. Gassendi strongly rejected the idea that there would be numerous gods as well as the Epicurean idea that atoms came together accidentally. There was a God above human beings, and nature was its best evidence. Gassendi, thus, established an ideology different from the mainstream philosophers of his time and created a work that would be very influential in reconciling the doctrines of Jesus and Epicurus.

⁵⁰ Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God*, p.23.

⁵¹ Adams, *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, letter to William Short, p. 389.

Jefferson's "The Philosophy of Jesus"

Jefferson did not only reconcile the ancient with the divine; he also wrote pamphlets about Jesus and his idealised version of him. "The Philosophy of Jesus" is a short work—nearly forty-six pages—written, or rather, compiled by Jefferson. In fact, it is not an original work of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson, in a letter to Charles Thomson, described "The Philosophy of Jesus" in this way:

I too have made a wee little book, from the same materials, which I call the Philosophy of Jesus. It is a paradigma of his doctrines, made by cutting the texts out of the book, and arranging them on the pages of a blank book in a certain order of time or subject. A more beautiful or precious morcel [sic] of ethics I have never seen. It is a document in proof that I am a *real* Christian, that is to say, a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus, very different from the Platonists, who call *me* infidel, and *themselves* Christians and preachers of the Gospel, while they draw all their characteristic dogmas from what it's [sic] author never said or saw.⁵³

Jefferson's main aim in compiling "The Philosophy of Jesus" was obvious: to point out the real philosophy of Jesus by omitting the parts in the Bible that had been put in there intentionally by the Platonists. The real philosophy of Jesus was going to be a personal guide for Jefferson. He never published it and he sent it only to some of his intimate friends. Unluckily, Priestley could not read it because he had passed away before Jefferson sent it.

On February 4, 1804, Jefferson received two sets of the New Testament—a pair of virtually identical English editions published in Dublin as well as two copies of a Greek-Latin edition published in

⁵² Howard Jones, *The Epicurean Tradition*, (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 166.

⁵³ Adams. *Jefferson's Extracts from the Gospels*, letter to Charles Thomson, Monticello, January 9, 1815 (i. e. 1816), p. 364-5.

London.⁵⁴ Jefferson used only the English copies and cut out the best Gospels from Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. "The Philosophy of Jesus" starts with a "History of Jesus" from Luke and ends with the "Death of Jesus" from John, Matthew, Mark and Luke. It also includes precepts, parables, and parts about prudence, marriage, God and the Kingdom of Heaven.

From many perspectives, "The Philosophy of Jesus" cannot be regarded as a good and clear work. At first sight, it seems incomprehensible and useless. Why should a man like Thomas Jefferson choose to write about the family history of Jesus? Perhaps to point out the fact that Jesus had had a family like ordinary human beings.

The most interesting element of "The Philosophy of Jesus" is on its cover. There Jefferson wrote it was "an abridgement of the New Testament for the use of the Indians unembarrassed with matters of fact or faith beyond the level of their comprehension."⁵⁵ This statement is puzzling since Jefferson never saw the Native Americans as inferior and never mentioned that they had lower levels of comprehension. And, if he had the intention of converting all the Indians to the real Christianity, why did not he include the African-Americans? Dickinson W. Adams answers this question by stating that "Indians" was a code for the Federalists and all the enemies of Jefferson.⁵⁶

Jefferson and "The Life and Morals of Jesus"

"The Life and Morals of Jesus", also known as the "Jefferson Bible", that Jefferson wrote in 1820, is another important document of

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 27.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 55.

Jefferson's Christianity. It is a chronological document of the life of Jesus, but not an abridgement or a compilation like "The Philosophy of Jesus". It is a Bible rewritten by Jefferson according to his ideology about reason and nature. In brief, there are no angels and no miracles in it because they are the things that Jefferson could not see, or in short, feel. In writing his Bible, Jefferson used Bibles in Greek, Latin, Hebrew and French. It is, like "The Philosophy of Jesus", not a fully original work, but a comment made on the Holy Bible. A comparison between the Jefferson's Bible and New International version, which both describe Jesus' birth, indicates the differences:

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 28.

JEFFERSON'S BIBLE

And it came to pass in those days,
that there went out a decree from
Cesar Augustus, that all the world
should be taxed.

(And this taxing was first made when
Cyrenius was governor of Cyria)
And all went to be taxed, everyone
into his own city.

And Joseph also went up from
Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth,
into Judea, unto the city of David,
which is called Beth-lehem
(because he was of the house and
lineage of David.)

To be taxed with Mary his expoused
wife, being great with child.

And so it was, that, while they were
there, the days were accomplished
that she should be delivered.

And she brought forth her first-born
son, and wrapped him in
swaddling-clothes, and laid him in a
manger; because there was no room
for them in the inn. ⁵⁷

NEW INTERNATIONAL

In those days Caesar
Augustus issued a decree
that a census should be
taken of the entire Roman
world. (This was the first
census that took place
while Quirinius was governor
Of Cyria.)

And everyone went to his
town to register.

.....
And there were shepherds
living out in the fields nearby,
keeping watch over their
flocks at night. An angel of the
Lord appeared to them, and
the glory of the Lord shone
around them, and they were
terrified. But the angel said
to them, "Do not be afraid. I
bring you good news of great
joy that will be for all the
people. Today in the town of
David a Saviour has been
born to you; he is Christ the
Lord. This
will be a sign to you: You will
find a baby wrapped in
clothes and lying in a

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 135.

manger.”⁵⁸

Jefferson, as can be seen in the above lines, did not mention the birth of Jesus in the way the Bible does. He started with Luke 2:1-7 and continued with 2:40. 42-48. 51. 52. In addition to omitting the miracle at his birth, other miracles of Jesus like healing the hand of a man on the Sabbath day or raising a dead person were not included in the Jefferson Bible. For Jefferson, Jesus was a moral leader not a saviour. Therefore only the parts of the Bible which point out the morality and virtues of Jesus were included in this work. Jefferson's aim was the same with the same as that in compiling "The Philosophy of Jesus" : to free man from the mysticism of Platonic priests and to show him the way to the real doctrines of Jesus that aim at the morality of the virtuous man. Again like "The Philosophy of Jesus", the Jefferson Bible was a document which Jefferson sent to his intimate friends. He never made it public.

In his first inaugural address, on March 4, 1801, Jefferson stated that he wanted to banish "the religious intolerance under which mankind so long bled and suffered."⁵⁹ Four years later, on March 4, 1805, in his second inaugural address, Jefferson was still mentioning religious freedom. Even after his presidency, he continued to support that idea. In fact, his years at Monticello after the presidency were a time when Jefferson worked hard for religious freedom and education.

⁵⁸ *The Holy Bible: New International Version* (Lutherworth, England: The Gideons International, 1984), p. 1080.

⁵⁹ Jefferson's First Inaugural Address from <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/presiden/inaug/inaug.htm>.

The Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom was an important step in Jefferson's aim of providing American citizens with freedom of conscience. It was also the starting point of Jefferson's long and tiring struggle against criticism about his religious beliefs. The Statute, individually, is one of the thousands of documents that Jefferson left behind, but as a part of a whole, it symbolizes the establishment of religious freedom and the separation of the church and the state in America that Jefferson started in his home state, Virginia.

CHAPTER III THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

*And be enacted that there shall be
established, on the site provided
for the said college to be called
“The University of Virginia.”
(January 25, 1819)*

Thomas Jefferson's last legacy is the University of Virginia on which he started to work at the age of seventy-five. By the year 1813, he had in his mind the plans of a university. First, he tried to transform the school he attended, the College of William and Mary, into a secular university free from the influence and assistance of the church, but he could not succeed in that plan. Then he turned to the idea of building a university around Albemarle College which later became the Central College of the University of Virginia. On January 25, 1819, an Act for Establishing the University was passed, and the university opened its doors to thirty students in 1825. Even after his death, Jefferson's influence on the development of the university continued. There are written documents, letters between the rector of the university and Jefferson's son. In brief, the University of Virginia was Jefferson's work in retirement, and it is also his last masterpiece. In 1976, it was voted "the proudest achievement of

American architecture in the past 200 years.”⁶⁰ Apart from being a leading example of American architecture, the curriculum of the University of Virginia is also an excellent example for the ideal type of republican education that Jefferson worked to establish in his country throughout his life.

“Universal Education” and the University of Virginia

Dumas Malone, Jefferson’s Pulitzer winning biographer, seems to be interested in the long period of time that Jefferson spent on the establishment of the University of Virginia and focuses on the lack of financial assistance that was out of the control of Thomas Jefferson.⁶¹ The main point in reflecting on Jefferson’s university, however, rather than pointing out the difficulties in establishing the university, should be about the uniqueness in its philosophy of education and its architecture; these factors make the University of Virginia Jefferson’s last important achievement.

Long before the establishment of the University of Virginia, Jefferson had new ideas for education in the newly established republic. In 1778, he submitted a “Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge.” Its name is not “the General Diffusion of Knowledge”, but “the More General Diffusion of Knowledge”. That “more” implies Jefferson’s desire to expand the limits of education throughout the whole country. Only in this way, could citizens who were aware of their past and ready for their future be raised. Jefferson was really anxious about the future of his country; if

⁶⁰ Dumas Malone , *Jefferson and his Time*, vol. 6 (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1981), 2nd ed, p. xvii.

virtuous citizens who would work hard for their republic could not be educated by the State, the corruption would come easily. "Experience had shewn, even under the best forms, those entrusted with power have, in time ... perverted into tyranny."⁶² The citizens of America should be enlightened about their past to secure their future with their virtues.

From this perspective, the education model of Jefferson reminds one of Aristotelian liberal education. In his article, "Aristotle and the Idea of Liberal Education", Carnes Lord emphasizes the fact that the Founding Fathers like Jefferson searched for the proper education for responsible democratic governance, an idea which had its roots in the philosophy of John Locke and directly in Aristotle.⁶³ For Aristotle, in republics democratic citizenship was a way of life that should be learned, and Jefferson's main aim was to have the kind of citizens who were aware of the advantages of their democratic and republican system. Therefore, education in the United States, still aims at creating responsible citizens at all levels of education. Jefferson, with his "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge", brought out the idea of an active and influential education at all levels, from primary schools to higher education. He had the idea of giving the responsibility for primary schools to local initiative. That idea was based on the idea of dividing the republic into wards to let the citizens govern themselves more efficiently, as was the case in the ancient republics.

Like government, education was an important subject for Jefferson. In fact, education formed the basis of the art of government, so it should be

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 233-267.

⁶² Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience*, p. 214.

activated on the level of the individual. At the primary school level, students would learn arithmetic, reading and writing as well as “moral improvement” lessons.⁶⁴ After three years of such education, independent from the religious training of the Anglican Church, students should continue for six years in grammar schools which aimed at the education of more “selected” students. Grammar school education consisted of the teaching of the ancient languages, Hebrew, Latin and Greek. After the grammar schools, the institutions for higher education came, and they aimed at the education of particularly talented students.

Students should have the education that would support their training in republicanism, and apart from learning arts or sciences, they should also learn moral values, which were also important for Aristotle. Therefore, Jefferson planned to give moral instruction at the primary level of education. Jefferson, like Epicurus, gave importance to the virtue of prudence, or in Aristotle’s words “practical wisdom”. The ancients generally believed that people were born with virtues; it was not possible for them to learn all the virtues after their birth. To a certain extent, Aristotle shared the same idea that prudence, as a virtue, may not be “teachable”, but education could “assist its development”. Prudence was an important virtue for a leader, and it should be improved. Therefore, Aristotle never supported the gymnastic lessons in schools since they only required physical skills and were only a show of warfare. In brief, Aristotle aimed at an education that was both liberal and noble.

⁶³ Ober and Hedrick , *Demokratia*, p. 271-288.

⁶⁴ Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God*, p. 149.

In one of his letters, Jefferson stated that “ from every condition of our people the natural aristocracy of talents & virtue” would come, and stressed the need “of preparing by education, at the public expence, for the care of the public concerns.”⁶⁵ This comment is an important evidence reflecting Jefferson’s educational philosophy in its simplest form: Naturally talented aristocrats should be educated for the public benefit and for the continuance of the republic. Thomas Jefferson created the term “natural aristocracy” before the 1800s, and it has been discussed fully in the first chapter. Jefferson never believed that all the human beings had equal intellectual capacities, but they did have equal rights. Throughout a period of education that gave equal opportunities to American men, the more talented students would be selected to serve the republic. These people were the “natural aristocrats”, and they were going to open the way for everyone’s “pursuit of happiness”. From this perspective, it can be seen that education was an instrument that promoted the pursuit of happiness, which was the main aim of an individual.

“Natural aristocrats” had to be chosen by the citizens themselves, not by the people in the government. Dividing the primary education into ward levels could be an idea that was related to this fact; people at the local level could choose the “natural aristocrats” among them easier and earlier. Nevertheless, there were “natural aristocrats”, and their main duty was to serve the republic. According to one of Jefferson’s letters:

I agree with you that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents ... There is also an artificial

⁶⁵ Letter to Joseph Carrington Cabell, Monticello, January 5, 1815, from <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>

aristocracy founded on wealth and birth, without either virtue and talents; ... The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature for the instruction, the trusts and government of society ... May we not even say that government is the best which provides most effectually for a pure selection of these natural aristoi into the offices of government? The artificial aristocracy is a mischievous ingredient in government, and provision should be made to prevent its ascendancy.⁶⁶

Jefferson made that necessary "provision" by establishing the University of Virginia. Apart from being a center of education, it became a microcosm of Jefferson's ideal world. The branches that were going to be taught in the University of Virginia were the first items in Jefferson's list of the talents of a virtuous natural aristocrat:

In the said university shall be taught Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages, French, Spanish, Italian, German and Anglo-Saxon, the different branches of mathematics pure and physical; natural philosophy, the principles of architecture; chemistry; mineralogy, including geology; botany; zoology; anatomy; medicine; civil government; political economy; the law of nature and nations; municipal law; history, ideology, general grammar; ethics; rhetoric; and belles lettres; which branches of science shall be distributed, and under so many professors, not exceeding ten as the Visitors shall think proper.⁶⁷

Thomas Jefferson thought about every detail about his university. He wanted to give education in every branch which would be useful in the future life of the students. These branches of science and art were also the branches in which Jefferson himself had an immense knowledge. As a natural aristocrat, he was going to show the way to the students of the University of Virginia. Also, the professors would not be more than ten in the university since that would not suit the Visitors' expectations and also Jefferson's. The plan of the university, which will be discussed below, was designed by Jefferson according to his idea of an "academical

⁶⁶ Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, p.239.

village.” The University of Virginia was going to be a village in which the students and the professors were going to find all their needs met. Jefferson even added an item to his act about the accomodation of the professors:

Each professor should be allowed to the use of the apartment and accomodation provided for him, and those first employed gain standing salary as the visitors shall think proper and sufficient.⁶⁸

The University of Virginia was going to be an institution in which there would be a full interaction between the visitors and the professors. It was a small form of Jefferson’s ideal republic in which everybody declared his opinions and had the chance to send even the professors to courts to get punished like everyone who committed a crime. Each of the three branches had their places in the government. The Rector in a way, governed the university with the consent of the students. All the members of the university came together at certain dates like “on every 29 of february “ or “on sunday which came after it” and at those meetings everyone was assigned duties. This was a kind of an election but on a university basis.

Jefferson aimed at establishing a small republic within the University of Virginia, and therefore, he did not include lessons in religion since it was against his idea of freedom of conscience. In an institution like the University of Virginia which had a perfect order, why should there be the order of religion? Later, again related to the idea of freedom of conscience, in 1822, the report of the university’s Board of Visitors suggested that each sect might build a divinity school “on the confines” of

⁶⁷ “An Act of Establishment of the University of Virginia”, to Joseph Cabell, from <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>

the university.⁶⁸ But history was more important than religion for Jefferson since it teaches right and wrong and helps prevent mistakes. Therefore the students should be capable in all of the ancient languages as well as the modern ones and finally, in Anglo-Saxon. This last language was directly related to Jefferson's idea that the ancestors were the Anglo-Saxons living in England before the Norman invasion. That would teach the students that they had the republican virtues in their blood and compares to the ancients' belief that people were born with certain virtues.

In his youth, Jefferson always desired to have an institution of higher education that would compete with the ones in Europe. He never supported the idea of sending students to Europe for education since education abroad exposed innocent American youths to "a fondness for European luxury and dissipation ... a contempt for the simplicity of ... [their] own country ... a passion for whores, destructive for health."⁷⁰ In short, the European institutes were corrupt, lost their virtues and would easily spoil the innocent republican minds of the American youth. Accordingly, Jefferson established the University of Virginia in Charlottesville which was going to be better than the universities in Europe in every aspect, but, again, Jefferson demonstrated his talent in reconciling the value of the Old and the New World and brought the best parts of these two different places together in order to create the best system of education in America.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: from Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994), p. 73.

⁷⁰ Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience*, p. 215.

He called European professors to his university:

We have just had a meeting of the Visitors, who have determined to open the Institution on the 1st day of feb. Next; taking the intermediate time to procure professors. These must be sought chiefly in Europe, as we are determined to have none but, of the first grade of science in their respective lines. We employ a person, well qualified, to go there, seek them out, & engage them, so as to be in place in november. We establish eight professorships 1. antient languages 2. modern languages 3. mathematics 4. natural philosophy 5. natural history 6. anatomy and *medecine[sic]* 7. moral philosophy 8. law. The last professors only will be taken among ourselves.⁷¹

Jefferson wanted everything and everyone that were the best for his university, and he was aware of the fact that the best professors could only be found in Europe since they had established universities before Americans:

we have determined to recieve no one who is not of the first order of science in his line; and as such, in every branch, cannot be obtained with us, we propose to seek some of them at least in the countries ahead of us in science, and preferably in Great Britain, the land of our own language, habits and manners ... from our information of the characters of the different Universities, we expect we should go to Oxford for our classical professor, to Cambridge for those of Mathematics, natural philosophy, and natural history, and to Edinburgh for a professor of Anatomy, and the elements of outlines only of *medecine[sic]*.⁷²

Although Jefferson here acknowledges England as his fatherland and as the origin of his own habits and customs, there were reasons and different groups of thought that led England to corruption, and Jefferson made a distinction between the good and the bad. One of the major reasons for the establishment of the University of Virginia was to give the proper education to American youth since "at the age of 16. it is high time

⁷¹Letter to Nicholas P. W. Trist, April 13, 1824 from <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>

⁷²Ibid., letter to Richard Rush, April 28, 1826.

for youths to begin to learn to practise the duties of obedience to the laws of their country"⁷³, or simply, to become virtuous, republican Americans.

Therefore, Jefferson did not welcome every European, or English, professor to the university. He had his own values which had urged him to write the Declaration of Independence. In a letter that he wrote before those above, he cited as an example his own profession, law:

In the selection of our Law-Professor we must be rigorously attentive to his political principles. You will recollect that, before the revolution, Coke Littleton was the Universal elementary book of law-students, and a sounder Whig never wrote, nor of profounder learning in the orthodox doctrines of the British constitution, or in what were called English liberties. You remember also that our lawyers were then all Whigs. But when his black-letter text, and uncouth, but cunning learning got out of fashion, and the honied Mansfieldism of Blackstone became the Student's Horn-book, from that moment, that profession (the Nursery of our Congress), began to slide into toryism, and nearly all the young brood of lawyers now are of that hue. They suppose themselves indeed to be whigs, because they no longer know what whiggism or republicanis means. It is in our Seminars that that Vestal flame is to be kept alive; it is thence it is to spread anew over our own and the sister states.⁷⁴

In this letter to James Madison, from whose assistance Thomas Jefferson benefited after his retirement, especially in the establishment of the University of Virginia, Jefferson pointed out the danger of the transformation of the coming generations into Tories, or in American terms, to Hamiltonian Federalists. That would be the greatest danger for the future of the United States of America, since according to Jefferson Federalism meant losing all the ties with the virtues and the principles of republicanism.

Therefore, apart from the political views of the professors who were going to be employed in the University of Virginia, Jefferson gave

⁷³ Ibid., letter to Joseph Coolidge, Jr., June 4, 1826

⁷⁴ Ibid., letter to James Madison, February 17, 1826

importance to the choices of books that were going to be read by the students. Trevor Colbourn, in *The Lamp of Experience* mentions Jefferson's elimination of certain books he did not like. Whereas he favored writers and their books such as Locke's *Essay Concerning the True Original Extent of Civil Government* and Sydney's *Discoursing Concerning Government*, he approached David Hume with caution because Hume was "an unreliable historical heretic" and a Tory; the students should only read his works after reading the books of writers like Rapin who was Jefferson's favourite.⁷⁵ From this perspective, Jefferson's main goal was to educate real republicans who were completely aware of their republican past in the Old World. Only after comprehending that fully, would they have the chance to read books which differed from those and which would be examples of the wrongness and corruption of anti-republicans.

In short, the aims of Jefferson's "universal education" were distinctly political: first, to supply people with knowledge of those subjects that would ensure their future "freedom and happiness," and second, to select from each local school district or ward the most virtuous and talented children to be sent for further study at public expense.⁷⁶ Everybody had an equal chance to receive higher education since everyone was created with equal rights. But higher education would be given only to people who were born with superior intellectual capacities, Jefferson's "natural aristocrats." Jefferson never drew clear lines about these aristocrats and gave the right to choose them to the people. Since "all free children,

⁷⁵ Colbourn, *The Lamp of Experience*, p. 215-7.

⁷⁶ Yarbrough, *American Virtues*, p. 125-6.

female and male” had the right to an education, the more talented ones would show themselves in public. As in his Declaration, Jefferson again, with the idea of “universal education,” mentioned the equal rights of education of every person regardless of their race or sex. On the other hand, in all of the documents about the University of Virginia, he did not utter a word about the education of female students, but the University is still a good example for an education reform and became one of the most important milestones in the development of American education. Jefferson’s idea of educating good republican citizens who would govern their country with the knowledge and virtues that they would learn at the newly organized schools, is still influential in the arena of education.

Jefferson the Architect and the University of Virginia

Apart from being a lawyer, a mathematician, a philosopher, a statesman, etc., Thomas Jefferson was a talented architect who wanted to create a genuine American architecture. Due to the fact that there was no school of architecture in the Americas during the time when he had his higher education, Jefferson learned everything from architecture books imported from Europe; he was a self-taught architect. His main reference books were the distinguished baroque architect James Gibbs’ *Rules for Drawing the Several Parts of Architecture* and *Book of Architecture*, Robert Morris’s *Select Architecture*, and Leoni’s *The Architecture of Andrea Palladio in Four Books* (English editions of 1715 and 1742, or both).⁷⁷ During the times while Jefferson was reading those books, there was another popular book in America, Cabell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus*, a

⁷⁷ William Howard Adams, *Jefferson’s Monticello*, (New York: Abbeville Press, 1983), p. 60.

major interpretation of Palladio's architecture, and a major source in English for Palladian ideas. However, Jefferson did not look at that version of Palladianism, or to English architecture in general, with great sympathy. He once wrote that:

London, the handsomer than Paris, is not so handsome as Philadelphia. Their [England's] architecture is the most wretched stile I ever saw, no meaning to except American where it is bad, nor even Virginia where it is worse than any other part of America, which I have seen.⁷⁸

From this passage, one interesting fact about Jefferson reveals itself: Jefferson did not like the architecture style of England, whether it was Palladian or not. Furthermore, he did not find any architectural work worth mentioning in his own state, Virginia, or many other places in America.

Accordingly, Jefferson was sought an architectural style that would reflect the strength of the newly established republic. Once he stated that he was waiting for "the first temple dedicated to the sovereignty of the people, embellishing with Athenian taste the course of a nation leading far beyond the range of Athenian destinies."⁷⁹ That was at point in which Jefferson departed from the English architects; their works were simple, not complicated enough for Jefferson. He wanted an architectural style which would be a symbol for his ideal republic just like the huge and colossal buildings of the ancient Greeks and especially the Romans that had been symbols of their republics. The public buildings in Virginia were "ugly, uncomplicated and happily more perishable." Jefferson was aware of the fact that those buildings would not endure and "every half century [his] country becomes a tabula rasa," and welcomed it since that would

⁷⁸ Letter to John Page, May 4, 1786, *Papers*, 9: 445-6, from "Assessment of American Architecture", <http://jefferson.village.virginia.edu/wilson/tjarch>

give architects a chance to build real works of lasting significance. Nevertheless, Jefferson admired one building in Richmond, the capital of Virginia, and that was the Capitol. He described it in *Notes on the State of Virginia*:

The Capitol is a light and airy structure, with a portico in front of two orders, the lower of which being Doric ... the upper is Ionic ... The genius of architecture seems to have shed its maledictions of this land ... But the first principles are unknown, and there exists scarcely a model among us sufficiently chaste to give an idea of them.⁷⁹

The Capitol was the ideal architectural symbol for Jefferson. It reminded him the works of the ancient architects. It was “the model of the Temples of Trectheus of Athens ... and of the Maison Quaree of Nismes” and as perfect an example of cubic architecture “as the Pantheon of Rome is the spherical one”.⁸¹

Jefferson travelled throughout Europe and spent five years in Paris where “he fell in love with a building”, with Maison Quaree. His years on the continent turned out to be excellent architectural experience for Jefferson, but he learned the technique of the ancient architects from Andrea Palladio's work, *The Four Books of Architecture* (*I Quattro Libri dell'Architettura*, 1570). Palladio, a sixteenth century Venetian architect, brought the ancient forms to the surface and used them in his building designs. Jefferson once declared that Palladio's book “was the Bible” and one should stick close to it.”⁸² Jefferson was influenced by Palladio's orders, the ones that he also saw on the Capitol in Richmond—Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Attic—and built Monticello's central portico

⁷⁹ Ibid., letter to Ladrobe, Monticello, July 12, 1813.

⁸⁰ Ibid., from *Notes on the State of Virginia*, p. 182-3.

⁸¹ Ibid. From Fiake Kimball's *The Capitol of Virginia*

⁸² Ibid., from *Cocke Papers*, from General Coles to general Cocke, February 23, 1816.

according to this order: Doric on the lower level and Ionic above since it is more refined. Also, Jefferson obeyed Palladio's rule which said "the pediments should be in height two ninths of their span."⁸³ While following the way of Andrea Palladio, Jefferson also followed the ancient Roman architect Vitruvius since Palladio's style had had its roots in Vitruvius's works. For Jefferson, the most influential works of Palladio were Villa Emo, Villa Pisani and Villa Rotunda, and he applied their forms to Monticello in a perfect manner. Even the statues were from the ancient times. Apollo Belvedere of Rome and Venus of Medici of Florence found their places in the list of copies of statues that Jefferson wanted for his mansion.⁸⁴ Jefferson's admiration for the ancients reflected itself in architecture in this manner. Jefferson tried to bring a unique style of architecture to Virginia by mingling Palladian architecture with American functionalism. He created his own Roman temple at Monticello, an ancient style mixed with American functionalism, beautiful and useful at the same time.

In many ways, the University of Virginia was a continuation of Jefferson's architectural vision. With the architects, William Thornton and Benjamin Latrobe, Jefferson started to work on the plans of the university at the age of seventy-five. His old age was an advantage since Jefferson had reached a maturity concerning his architectural style which can be easily comprehended from his ideas about the University of Virginia:

We are about to establish a College near Charlottesville on the formerly Colo. Monroe's, a mile above the town. We do not propose to erect a single grand building, but to form a square of perhaps 200 yards, and to arrange around that pavilions of about 24. by 36. ft. One

⁸³ Adams, *Jefferson's Monticello*, p. 22.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

for every professorship & his school. They are to be of various forms, models of chaste architecture, as examples for this school of architecture to be formed on.⁸⁵

These sentences reflect Jefferson's plan of an "academical village." Jefferson wanted to establish a university out of town where the students and the professors would find everything they needed. The idea of giving a pavilion to each professor that included both the school and the house of the professor with passages to the rooms of the students belonged to Jefferson. In that way, private and educational lives would mingle with each other, and the University of Virginia would become a separate world, far from the dangers of corruption, and a place where the students would learn to be intellectual and virtuous at the same time. In short, an ideal school of republicanism. Also, Jefferson did not forget the need to expand the borders of the university in future. Accordingly, Jefferson grouped nine of these units around an open-ended square, thus allowing for future expansion.⁸⁶

As for Monticello, Jefferson chose an ancient architectural style for the University of Virginia. It exhibited "some very chaste models of Grecian architecture, and an arrangement exhibiting them to good advantage."⁸⁷ Also, the list of the pavilions of the university points out the ancient influences:

Pavilions

- No. I Doric of Diocletian's baths from Chambray
- II. Ionic, with dentils from the temple of Fortuna Virilis. Palladio
- III. Corinthian. Palladio
- IV. Doric of Albans. From Chambray
- V. Ionic with modillions. Palladio's
- VI. Ionic of the Theatre of Marcellus. Dentils. Chambray

⁸⁵ Letter to James Dinmore, Monticello, April 13, 1817 from <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>.

⁸⁶ Malone, *Jefferson and His Time*, p. 257.

⁸⁷ Letter to Rembrandt Peale, Monticello, 19 January 1824 from <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>.

- VII. Doric of Palladio. With mutules
- VIII. Corinthian of Diocletian's Baths. From Chambray
- IX. Ionic with dentils. Temple of Fortuna Virilis. Palladio
- X. Doric of the Theatre of Marcellus. Chambray
- Rotunda. Corinthian of the Pantheon. From Palladio.⁸⁸

Palladio became one of the main influences for the architecture of the University of Virginia. From this perspective, the university was an outcome, a continuation of Jefferson's house. The Rotunda was the most important building in the academical village for Jefferson, seventy feet in diameter like the Pantheon in Rome. It stayed unfinished for a time, and Jefferson worked a lot on it. Later it served as the library. Different from Monticello, the university turned out to have a more monument-like structure with temples and baths and theatres. It was going to be an institution that reminded everyone of the power and dignity of the ancient world, "the first temple dedicated to the sovereignty of the people" who were going to receive the education to protect that sovereignty.

Freart de Chambray was another influential figure in the design of the University of Virginia as well as Monticello. Monticello owes most of its designs to Chambray. For Pavilion I at the university, Jefferson used Chambray's Plate 3, "Ordre Dorique au Termes de Diocletien au Rome" from his *Parallele de l'Architecture*.⁸⁹ Chambray's designs went very well with Palladio's architecture; the Roman figures found their places on Roman walls.

Another area where Jefferson devoted substantial attention was gardening. He even had his own *Garden Book*. In fact, *Notes on the State of Virginia* is also a good source to comprehend Jefferson's deep

⁸⁸ Ibid., Thomas Jefferson: University Pavilions, List of Classical Models: post 1817.

⁸⁹ Adams, *Jefferson's Monticello*, p. 138.

interest in plants and trees. He gave a full list of all the plants in Virginia. That could only be done by a person who had a great interest in botany. In fact, nothing would be more natural for a person like Jefferson than being interested in gardening and botanics. He helped originate the “agrarian myth”, yeoman farmers who would become the symbols of the self-developing republic. Jefferson’s first garden book was A. F. Dezallier d’Argenville’s *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* that was published in 1712, later, he included in his library Thomas Whately’s *Observations on Modern Gardening*, and he was also influenced by Chinese gardening. The last can be seen in the “Chinese railings” that Jefferson used first at Monticello and then in the pavilions of the University of Virginia.⁹⁰

Indeed, perhaps the most important things that Jefferson wanted to bring to America from Europe, after the ideal republicanism of the ancients and the ancient constitution of the Saxons, were plants. Jefferson was especially interested in exotic plants which would adapt themselves to the climate in Virginia. For Monticello’s garden, Jefferson asked for help from his Italian neighbor, Filippo Mazzei. From Italy, Mazzei brought orange trees, the vaga loggia peach, the angelica apricot, the boccon di re plum, and the poppe di Venere (Breast of Venus) peach; in return, Jefferson sent birds, seeds and plants of Virginia to the Grand Duke of Tuscany with Mazzei.⁹¹ For the garden of the University of Virginia, Jefferson contacted Abbe Correa, the former Ambassador of Portugal who had a “profound knowledge” in botanics. For the botany

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 152 and 184.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 182-3.

section of the university, Jefferson made recommendations and wrote a letter to John Patton Emmet:

My old friend Thonin Superintendant of the garden of plants in Paris has regularly sent me a box of such exotics to us as would suit our climate, and containing nothing indeginious with us. These I regularly sent to the Public and private gardens of the other states ... The trees I should propose would be ... the larch, cedar of Libanus Cork oak, Maronnier, Mahagony, the Catechu or Indian rubber tree of Napaul Teak tree Indian oak of Burman, the various woods of Brazil Etc.⁹²

Jefferson died roughly two months after writing this letter; ironically, he died on July 4, 1826, a few hours before his long time friend, and sometime enemy, John Adams. The University of Virginia was Jefferson's "last duty to his country." It was also the hardest one. The University of Virginia kept Jefferson busy in his last years but sometimes made him really tired. Jefferson wanted to establish it within a short period of time, but due to financial problems, it took longer to complete. Nevertheless, today a statue of Jefferson sits on the lawns of the University of Virginia and smiles almost boastfully at his achievement .

Thomas Jefferson began to walk a long and tiring road with the Declaration of Independence, a road that ended at the University of Virginia. His aim never changed: to establish a strong republic which would pass from generation to generation without being corrupted or weakened. Jefferson was aware of his past while writing the Declaration, and he did not forget it while establishing the university. He was an American, in fact a Founding Father of the United States of America, but also, he was a European; his ancestors had lived there. Therefore, without forgetting the heritage and customs of the Old World and

⁹² Letter to John Patton Emmet, Monticello, 27 April 1826 from <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>.

refraining from its corruptions, Jefferson helped his fellow citizens to establish the United States or, according to some historians, the “Empire of Liberty.” Liberty drove Jefferson to declare independence, promote religious freedom, and establish a university.

CONCLUSION

Thomas Jefferson was one of the most important Founding Fathers of the United States of America, and he had many dreams for his country. His most important accomplishments, in his view, were written on his epitaph: the Declaration of Independence, the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom and the University of Virginia. At first sight, these two documents and one institution seem independent from each other, but, in fact, there is a strong connection among them.

Jefferson had an ideal image of a country in his mind. He derived that image mostly from the huge numbers of books that he read. Those books made Jefferson aware of all the cultures and societies in the world, past or present. Jefferson was a man who believed that history is an important factor for a country and its citizens. Without knowing the past, a people could not build their future. The whole American nation had its roots in Europe and severing all the ties between Europe and America would be disastrous. Due to this fact, Jefferson never forgot his heritage; he brought the cultures of the Old World and the New World together. America was the land of new opportunities, and Jefferson used the opportunity to take the good and uncorrupt elements of Europe and bind them with the new conditions in America. But, nevertheless, his main goal was to live in an ideal type of republic similar to that of Rome before the empire. From this perspective, Jefferson had to be careful about the future of his country. It could easily become corrupt, as ancient Rome had.

In order to form a republic, first of all, the nation had to be independent. Jefferson's Declaration of Independence was the first step taken towards independence. Since God created all men equal and free, people had freedom of conscience, the right to choose. Religious intolerance had been the most painful oppression towards mankind for hundreds of years, and Jefferson would not give up his effort for establishing that freedom in his country. "Building a wall between the Church and the State" was important from this point of view. Governments were established to protect the rights of the people, not to oppress them. If a government favored a certain religious fact, how would it protect the rights of the others? The Statute for Religious Freedom was another first step, a step towards freedom of conscience in America. The current generation would live according to these principles, but no one could guarantee the future. Only a strong educational system would make the country confident of its future. The University of Virginia was established to educate virtuous, republican American citizens. If the Declaration was the symbol of independence, the University was the symbol of confidence in the future, according to Jefferson.

Thomas Jefferson was one of the most fascinating figures of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century America. His achievements are still alive, and they still symbolize the features of the New World: independence, a complete freedom, and equality in education. As a whole they mean one thing: the ideal republic from the past to the future.

Thomas Jefferson was a leader and a politician who benefited from every useful principle. Jefferson's philosophy was American from the perspective that he shaped his ideals for the newly established country, and European since he based his ideals on the experiences of the past, the past which became the basis of many newly established countries that aimed at becoming strong, independent, virtuous and confident of their future.

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